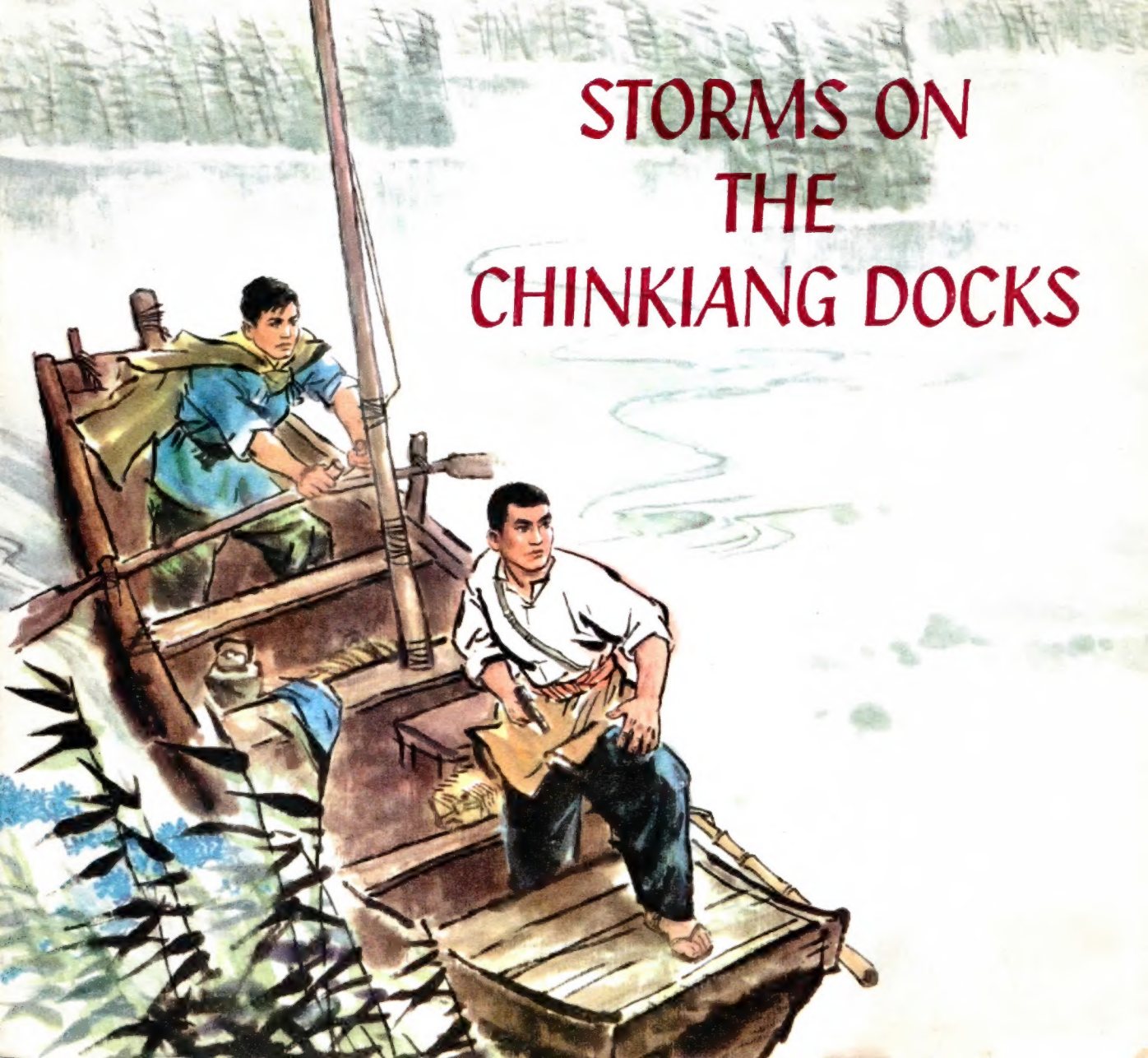


STORMS ON THE CHINKIANG DOCKS



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STORMS ON THE CHINKIANG DOCKS

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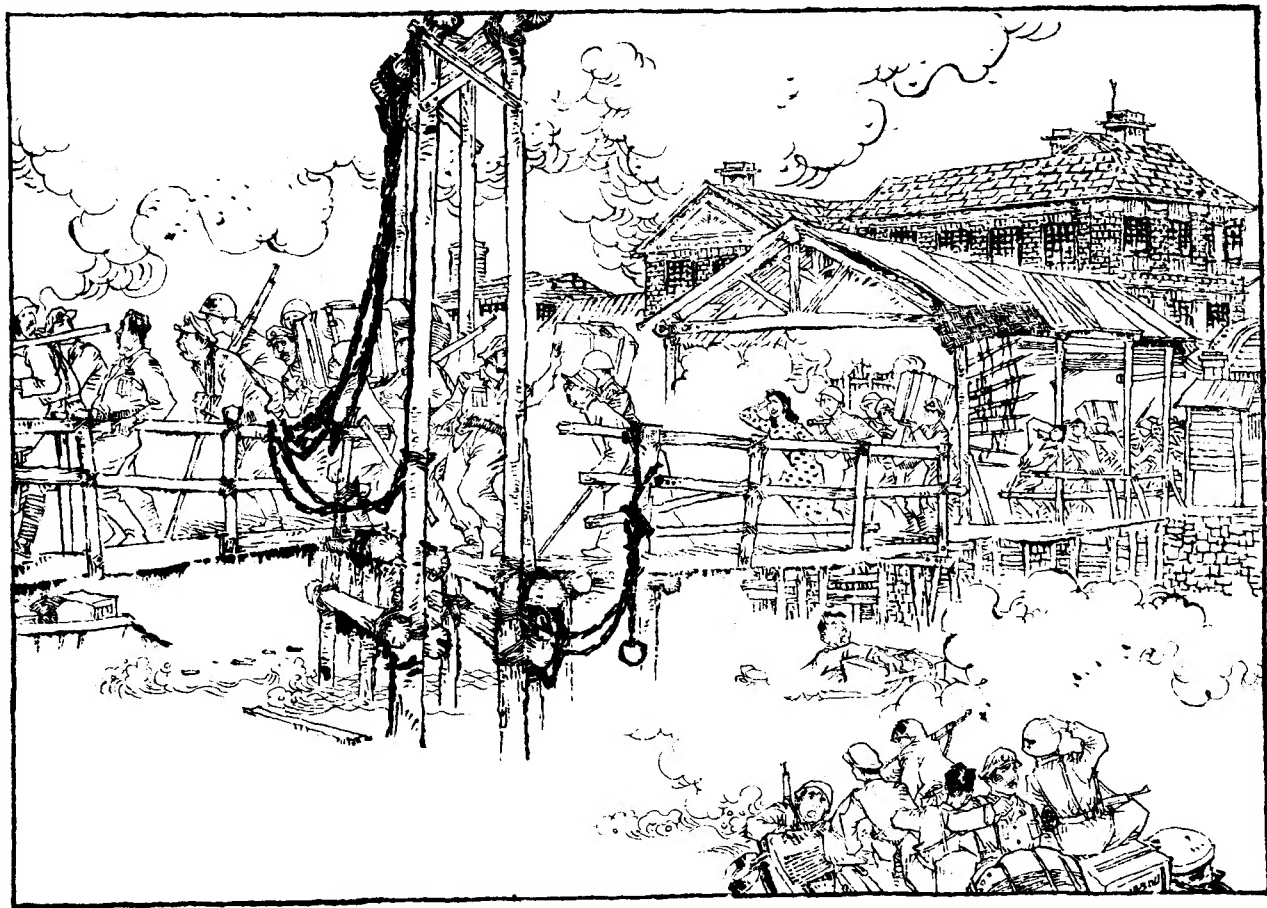
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The Story

IN the spring of 1949 when the Chinese People's Liberation Army was about to cross the Yangtze River, the Kuomintang troops in Chinkiang, Kiangsu Province, tried to ship some arms and ammunition out through the Chinkiang docks. The dockers, led by the local Communist Party organization, intercepted an enemy steamboat loaded with the arms, killed the enemy commander and captured the boat. Then they welcomed the Liberation Army on its drive south with a new supply of arms and ammunition.





1. In the spring of 1949 just before the People's Liberation Army crossed the Yangtze, the routed Kuomintang troops who had come over to Chinkiang from the north bank were fighting to get onto boats which would take them further south. Arriving at the river port they created scenes of great disorder.



2. The dockers guessed from this hasty retreat that the P.L.A. was on its way. They all kept a close eye on the enemy.



3. One day three trucks drew up unexpectedly on the docks. The dockers, carrying poles in their hands, crowded round the trucks.



4. A shortish man climbed out of one of the cabs. The workers recognized him at once as Whiskers Wang, a notorious boss in the Chinkiang docks.



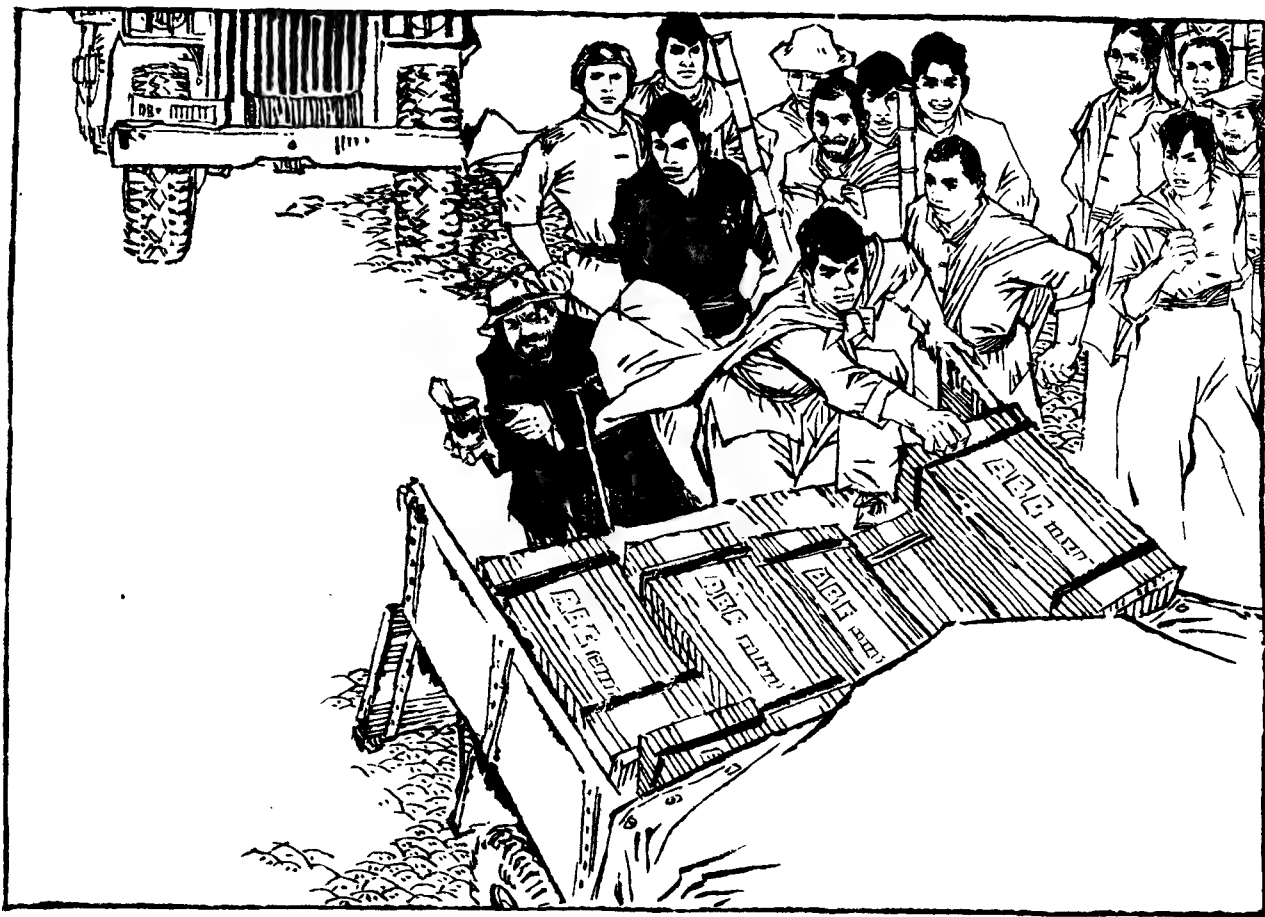
5. He was a sworn brother of the commander of the Kuomintang garrison at Chin-kiang. Normally he was so overbearing he had only to see a worker to start swearing and hitting out at him. Today, however, stretching out his hands towards the dockers he addressed them humbly: "Brothers, I have a favour to ask. . . ."



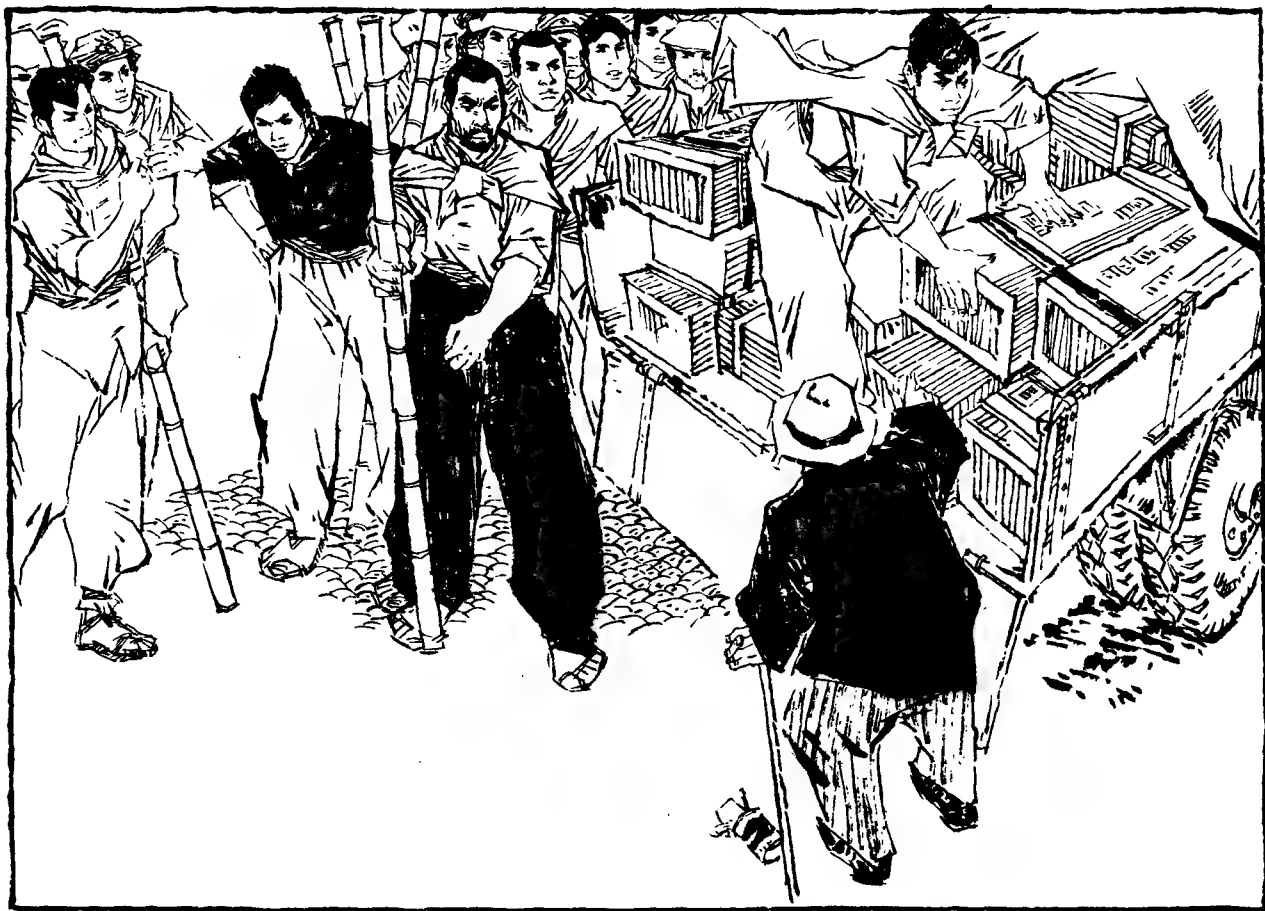
6. As he spoke he wrenched open a crate, pulled out a can and continued with a false smile, "This is a consignment of canned food which has to be shipped out. After you've loaded it, you can have a taste."



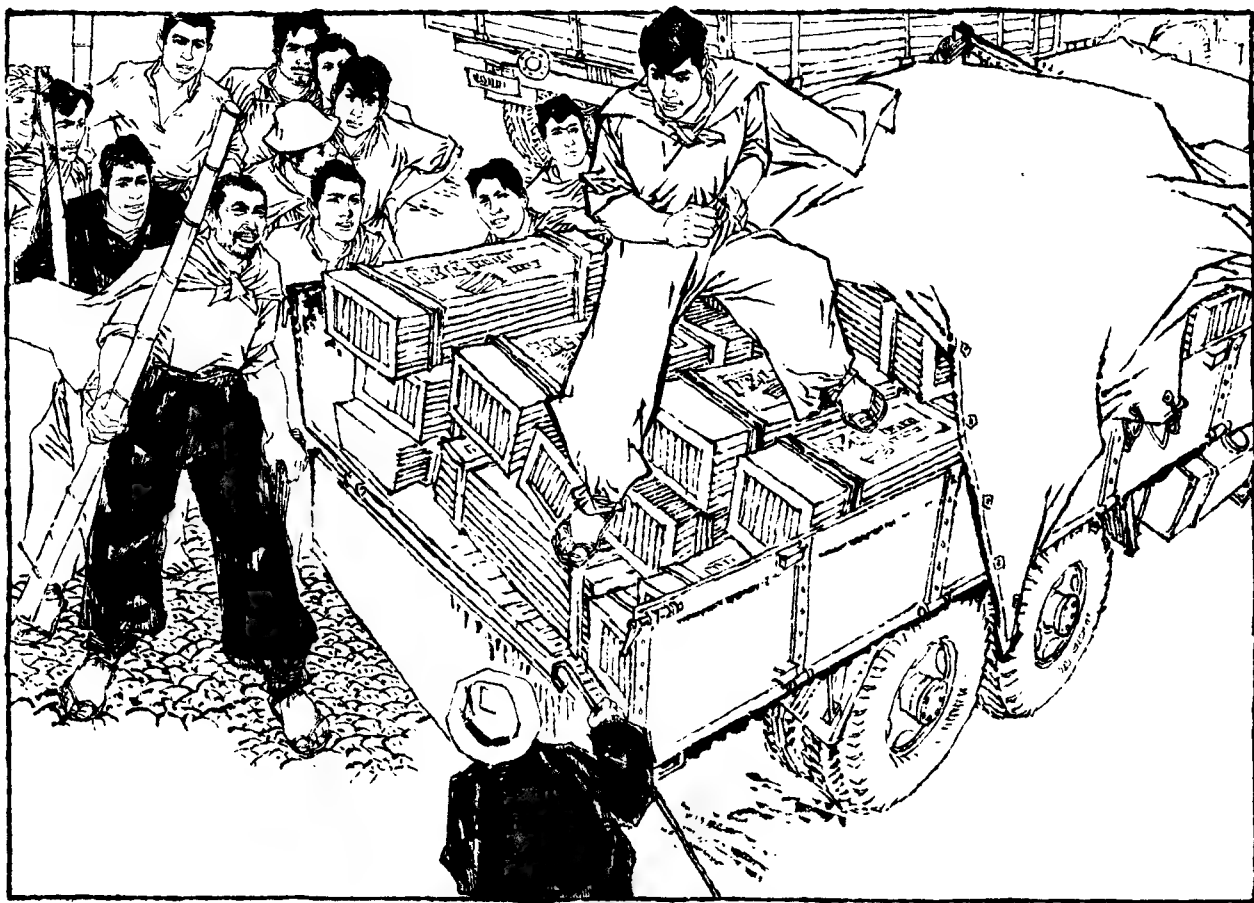
7 At that moment a strongly-built young man stepped out from among his mates. He was Heitze, deputy leader of the dockers' patrol. Looking into the trucks he saw they were loaded with securely closed crates stamped with the trademark of a U.S. canning company.



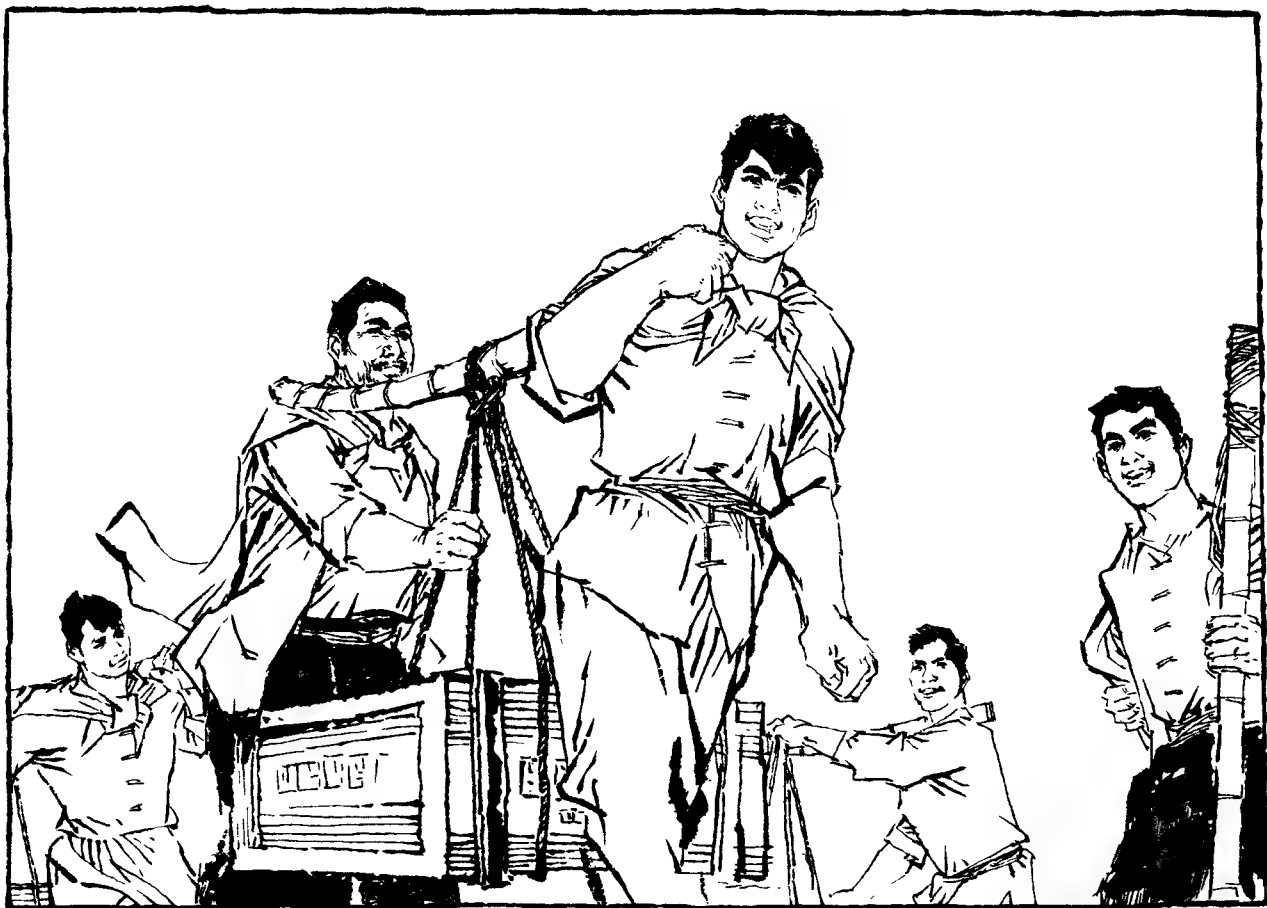
8. He remembered that a few days earlier Iron Man Cheng had warned him that the enemy was planning to smuggle a batch of guns and ammunition through the docks. The underground Party organization had asked the dockers' patrol to keep an eye out for them. Perhaps this was where they were hidden? He jumped up onto the truck for a closer look.



9. He tugged at one of the crates. Ah, it weighed a ton! How could a crate of canned food weigh so much? He looked back over his shoulder at Whiskers Wang who said shiftily: "Don't worry about the money, we'll pay handsomely."



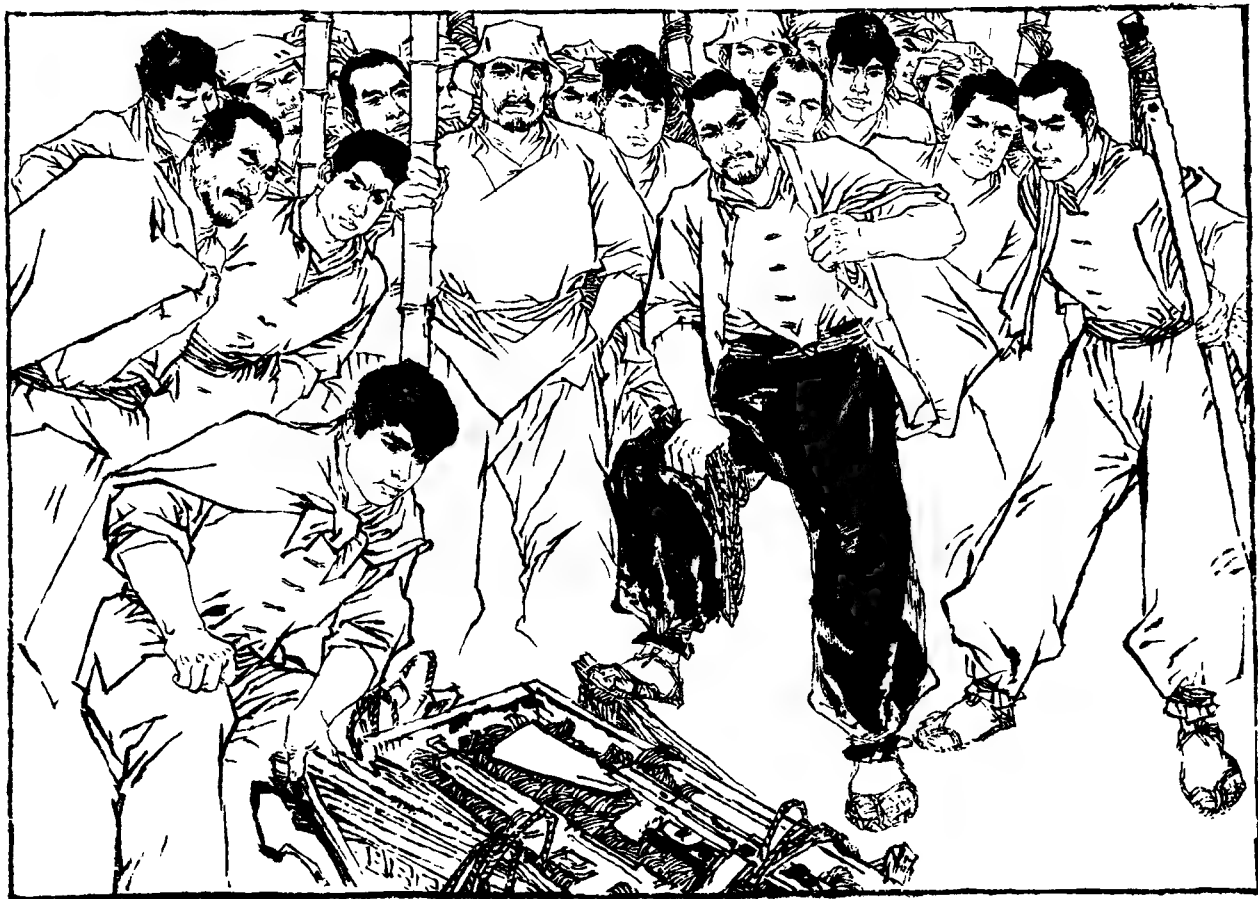
10. Heitze looked thoughtfully around him. Then he had an idea. Beckoning to his mates he said, "Let's get on with it." They promptly joined him.



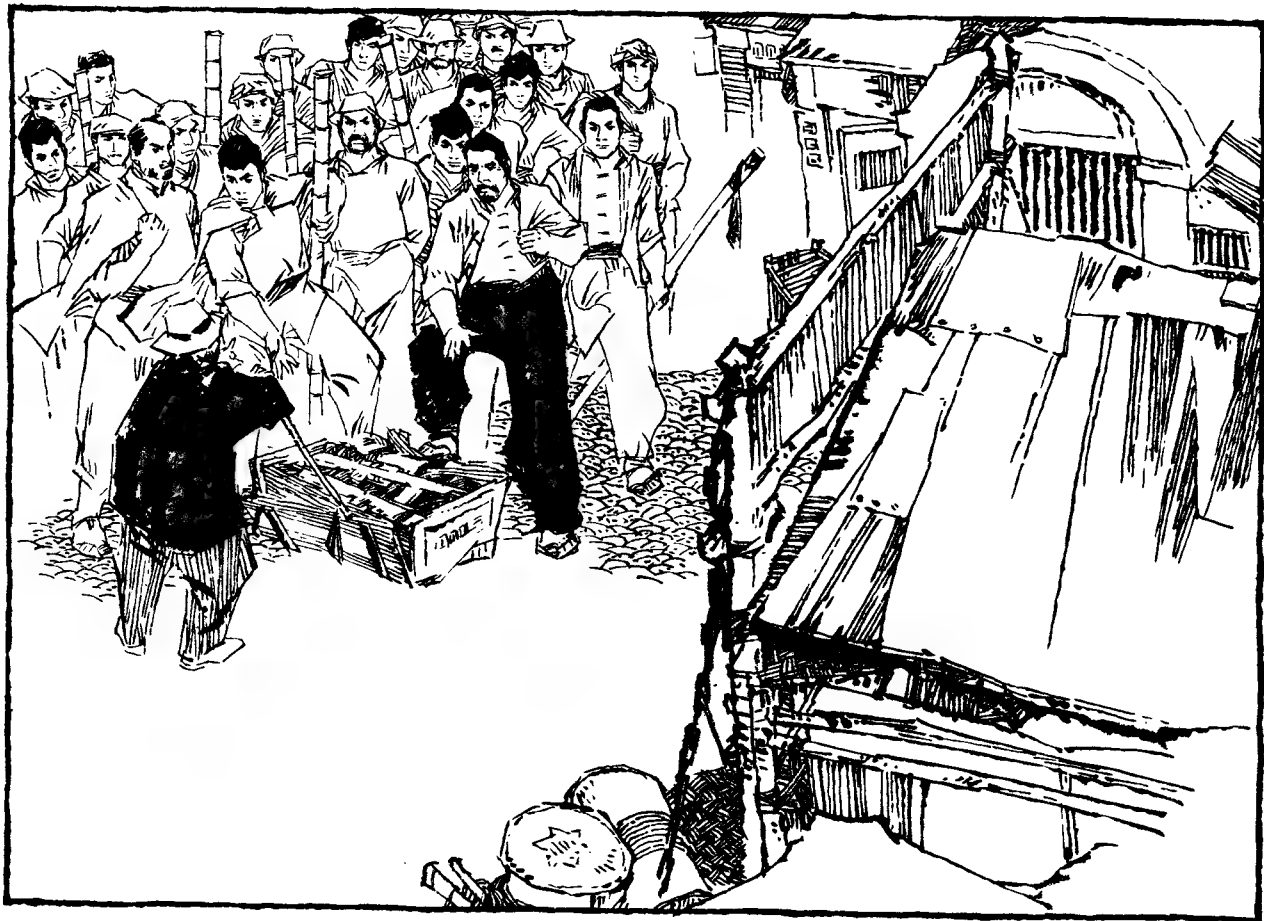
11. A crate on his shoulder pole, Heitze strode ahead of his mates singing a work-song. His song kept getting louder, so the others guessed he was telling them he was up to something.



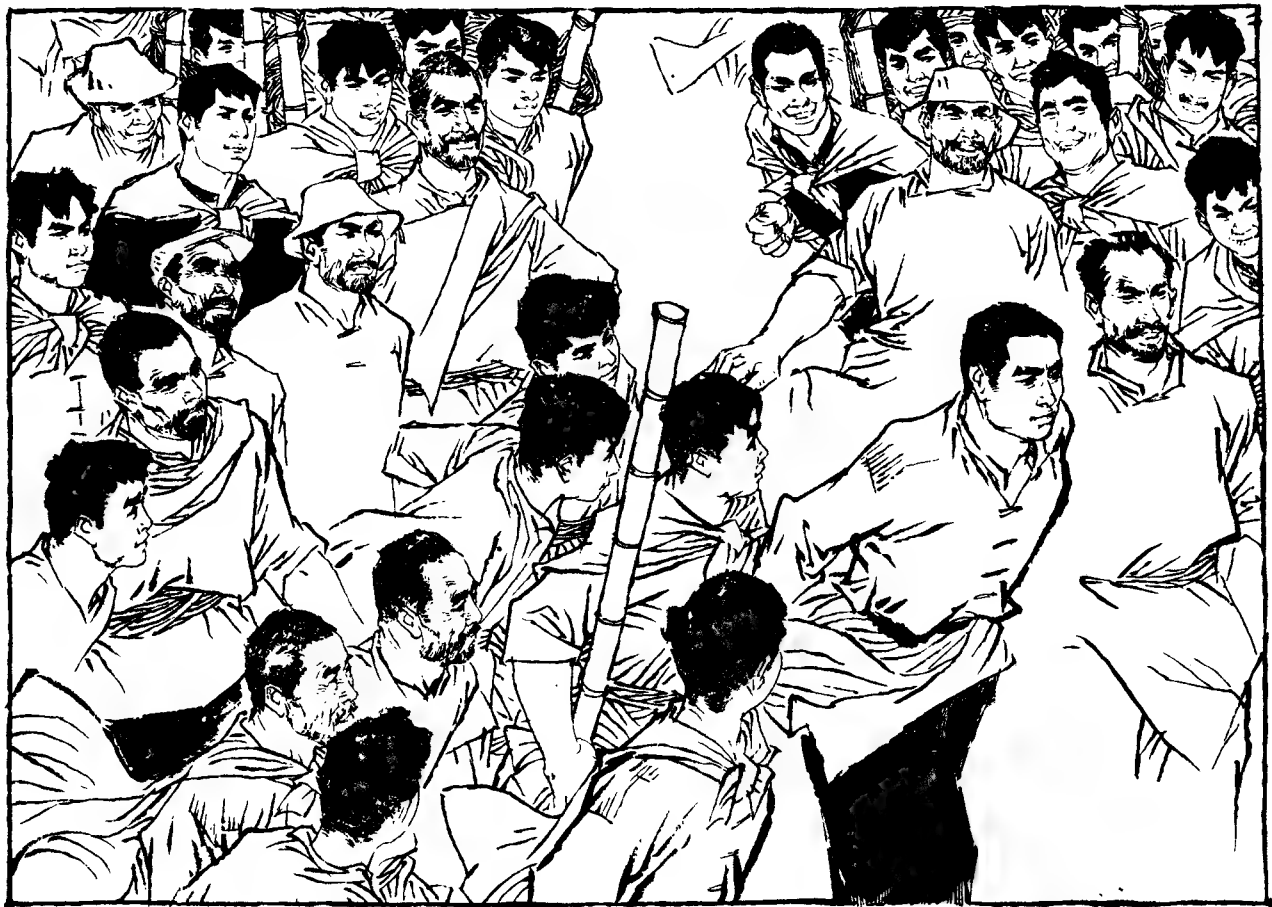
12. Sure enough, after a few paces, the crate fell with a crash and split open on the cobbled ground.



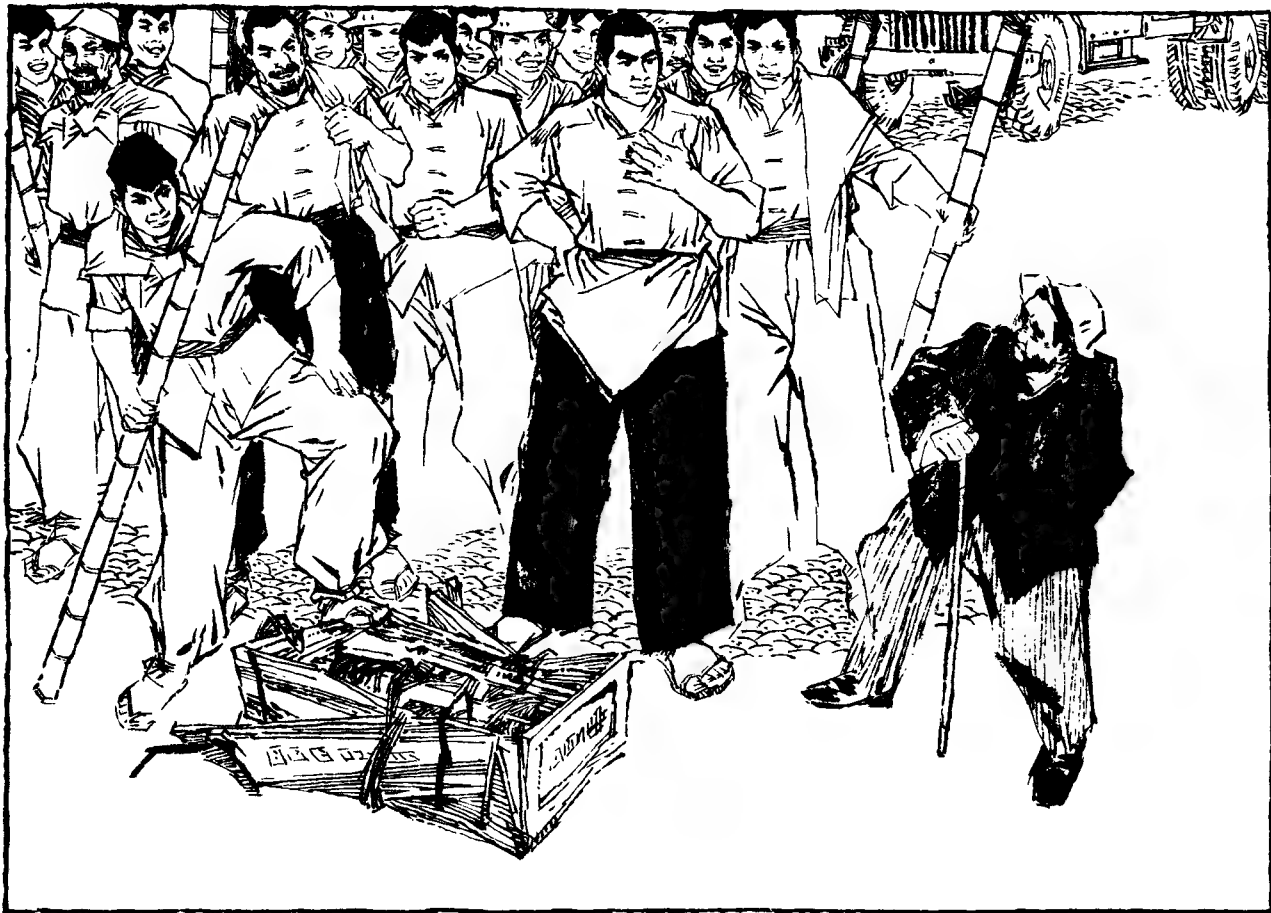
13. Everyone crowded around for a look. "Rifles, it's full of new rifles," they all exclaimed together. "Funny sort of cans."



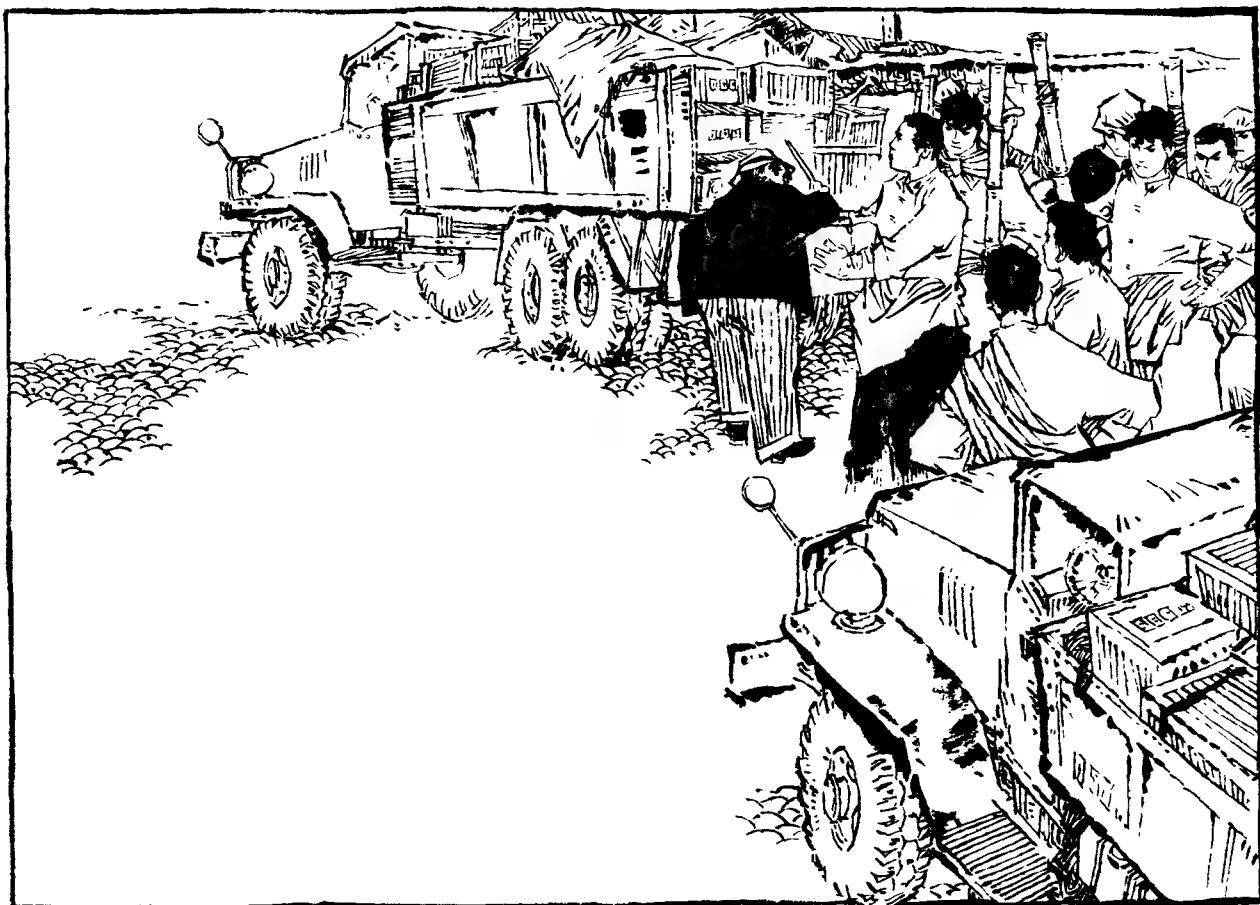
14. Furious, Whiskers Wang bellowed: "What are you up to?" "The crates aren't strong enough," the dockers chorused back at him.



15. "Who says?" demanded Whiskers Wang. "I do!" thundered a voice so loud that Wang staggered backwards. A strongly-built man came forward, his mates making way for him. It was Iron Man Cheng, head of the dockers' patrol.



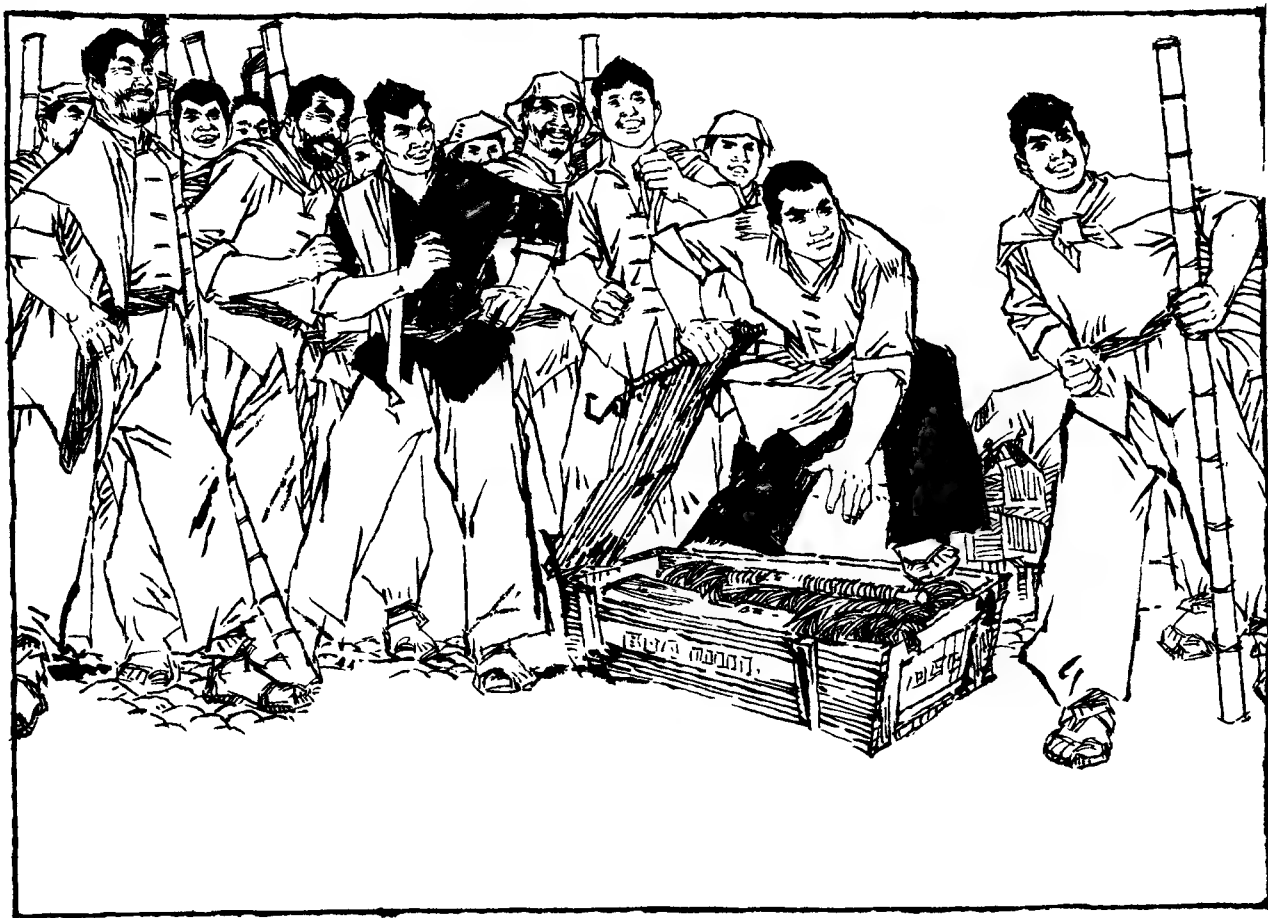
16. His appearance made the dockers feel braver, but it upset Whiskers Wang who thought: "This Cheng is always making trouble for us, and the dockers listen to everything he says. If I don't get tough with him today, these guns will never go out."



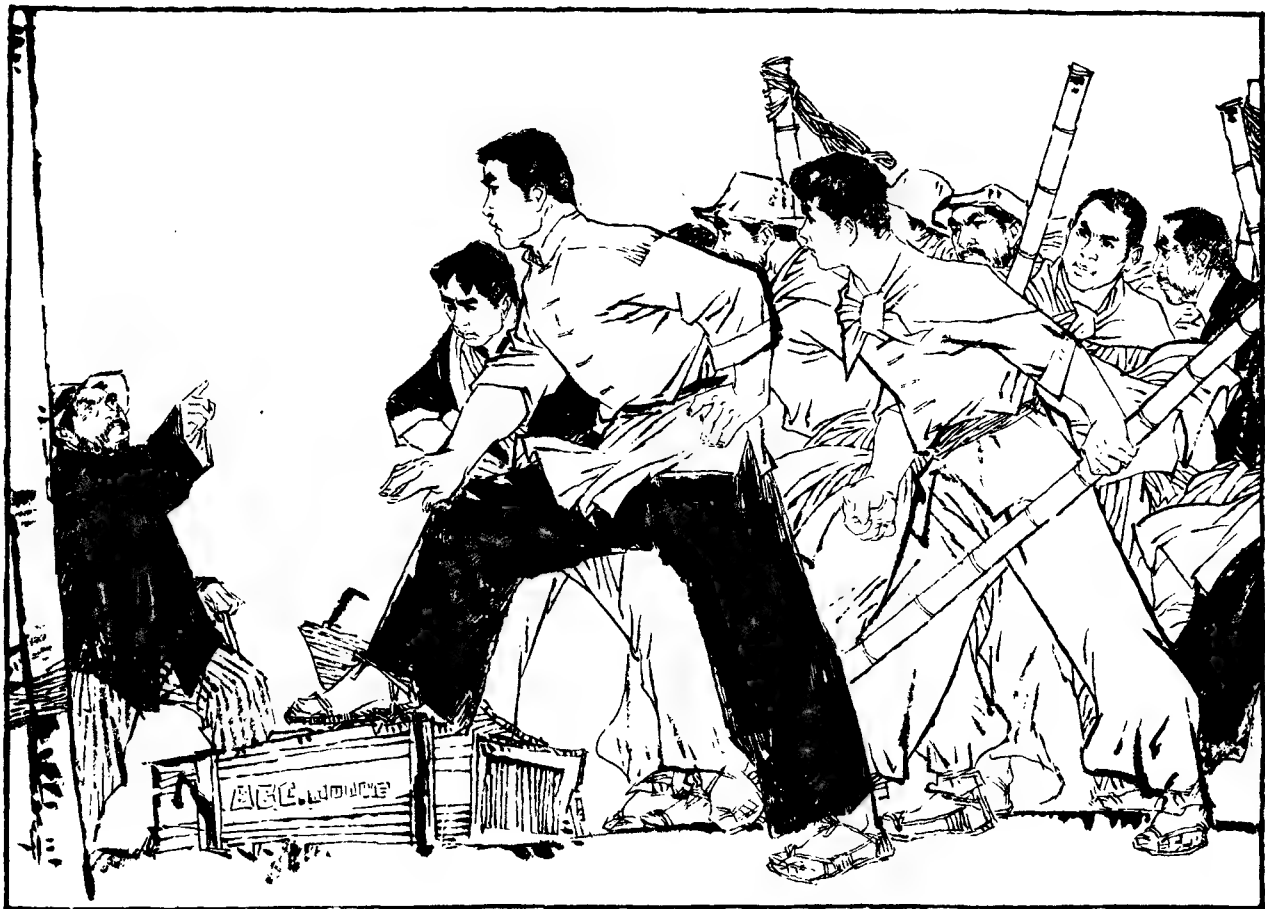
17. So he said goadingly: "Do you really mean the crates aren't strong?" "That's right," replied Iron Man Cheng. Wang picked out the biggest crate and said insolently, "Well, I bet you'll never be able to open that one."



18. Cheng sized it up in a glance, and smiled slightly. He rolled up his sleeves, tightened his belt and with one heave of his strong arms got the crate up and off the truck.



19. Then, putting his left hand against the crate, he wrenched up its lid with his right. There was a cracking sound and the crate opened, revealing machine-guns inside. The workers jeered.



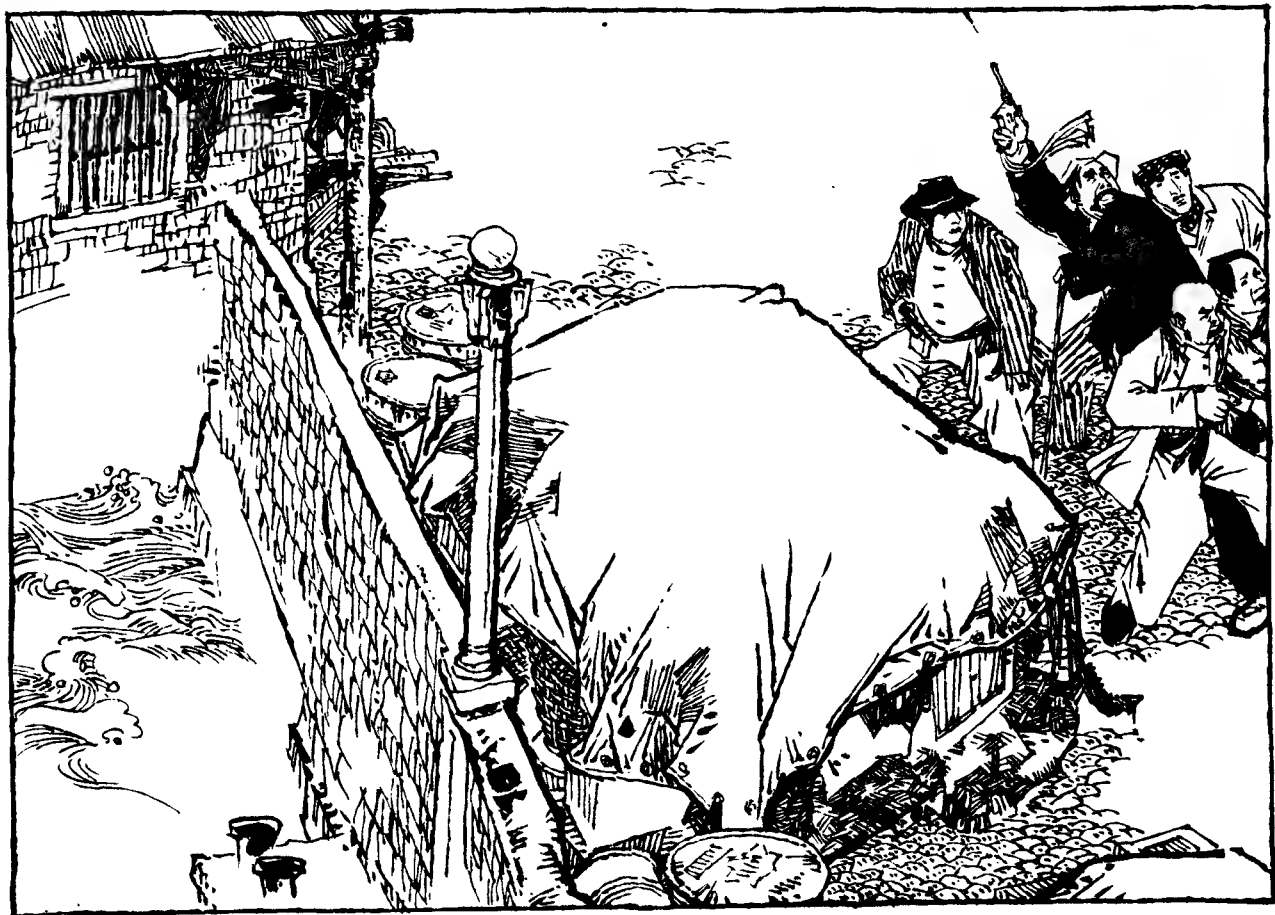
20. At first Whiskers Wang was speechless with rage. Then he yelled, "Well, you've had it now. These belong to the Kuomintang Army. You've let out a military secret. Come with me to H.Q."



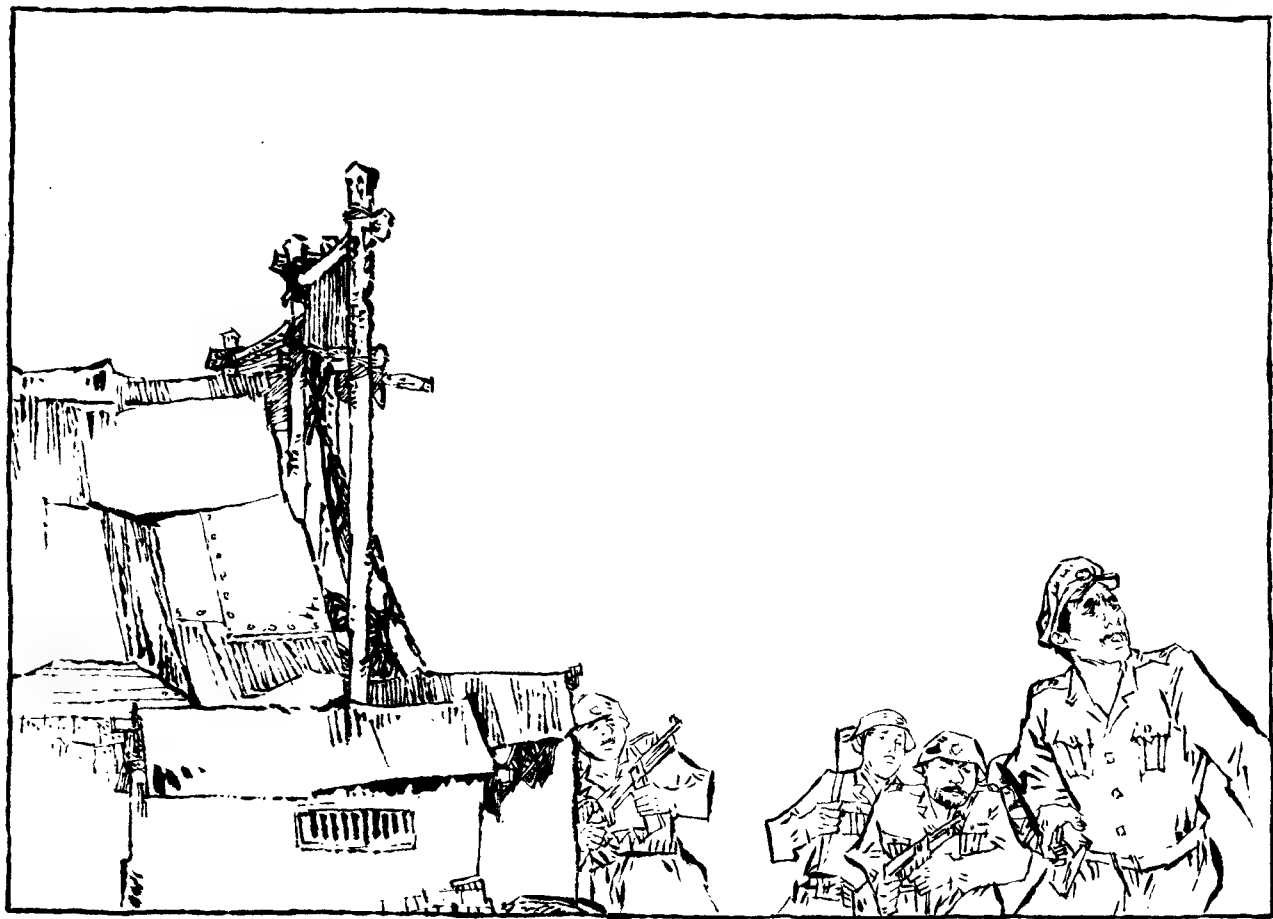
21. Iron Man Cheng stood his ground with a scornful smile. Whiskers Wang ordered his thugs to draw their revolvers and rush him.



22. Cheng beckoned his mates on, they all took up their carrying poles and lined up beside him, roaring: "Don't you dare!" The ruffians backed away in alarm.



23. Desperately, Whiskers Wang fired two shots in the air.



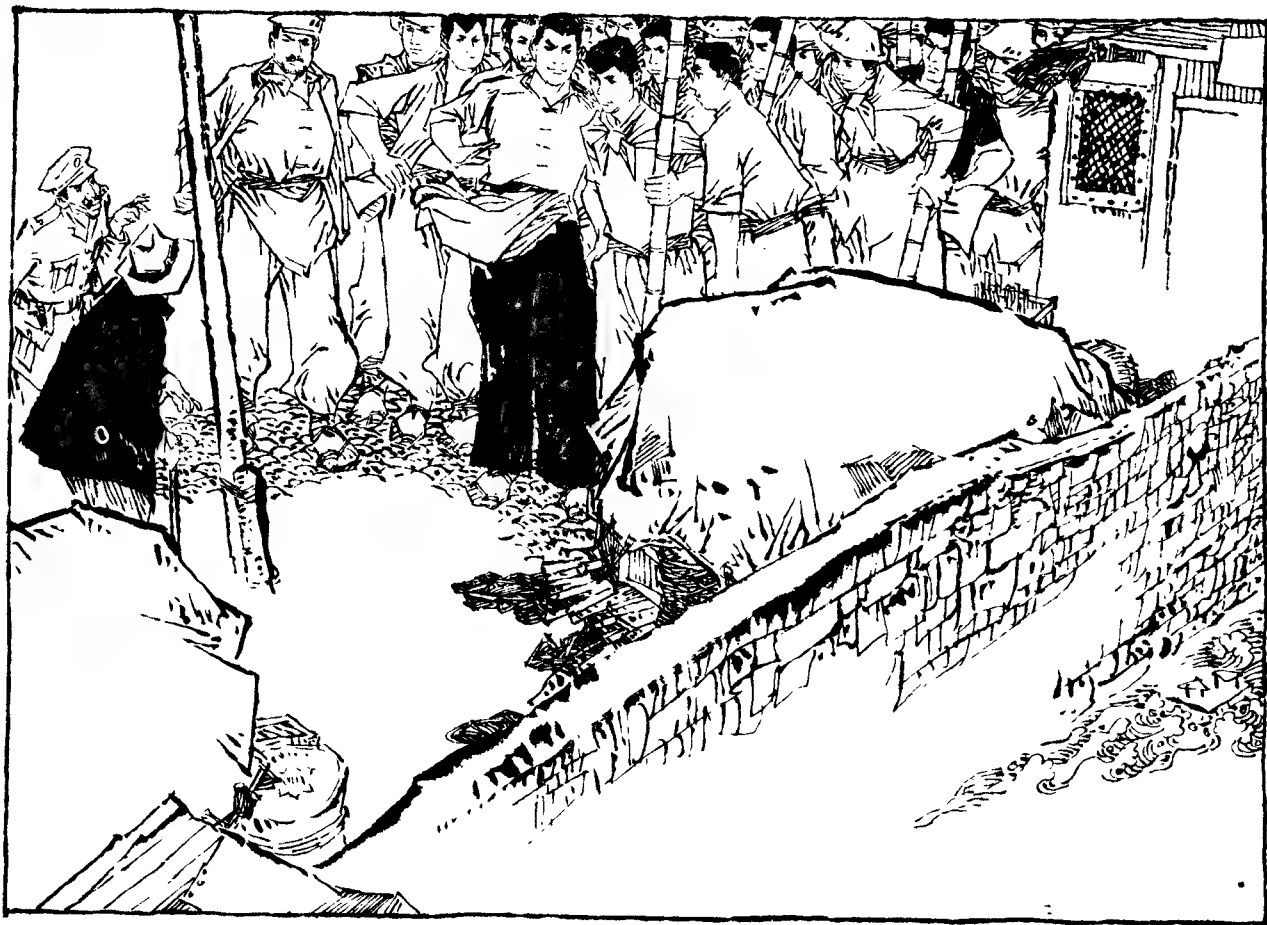
24. The noise brought a group of Kuomintang soldiers running. They were led by a lanky fellow — the garrison commander. His heart missed a beat at the sight of the dockers — so formidable with their carrying poles.



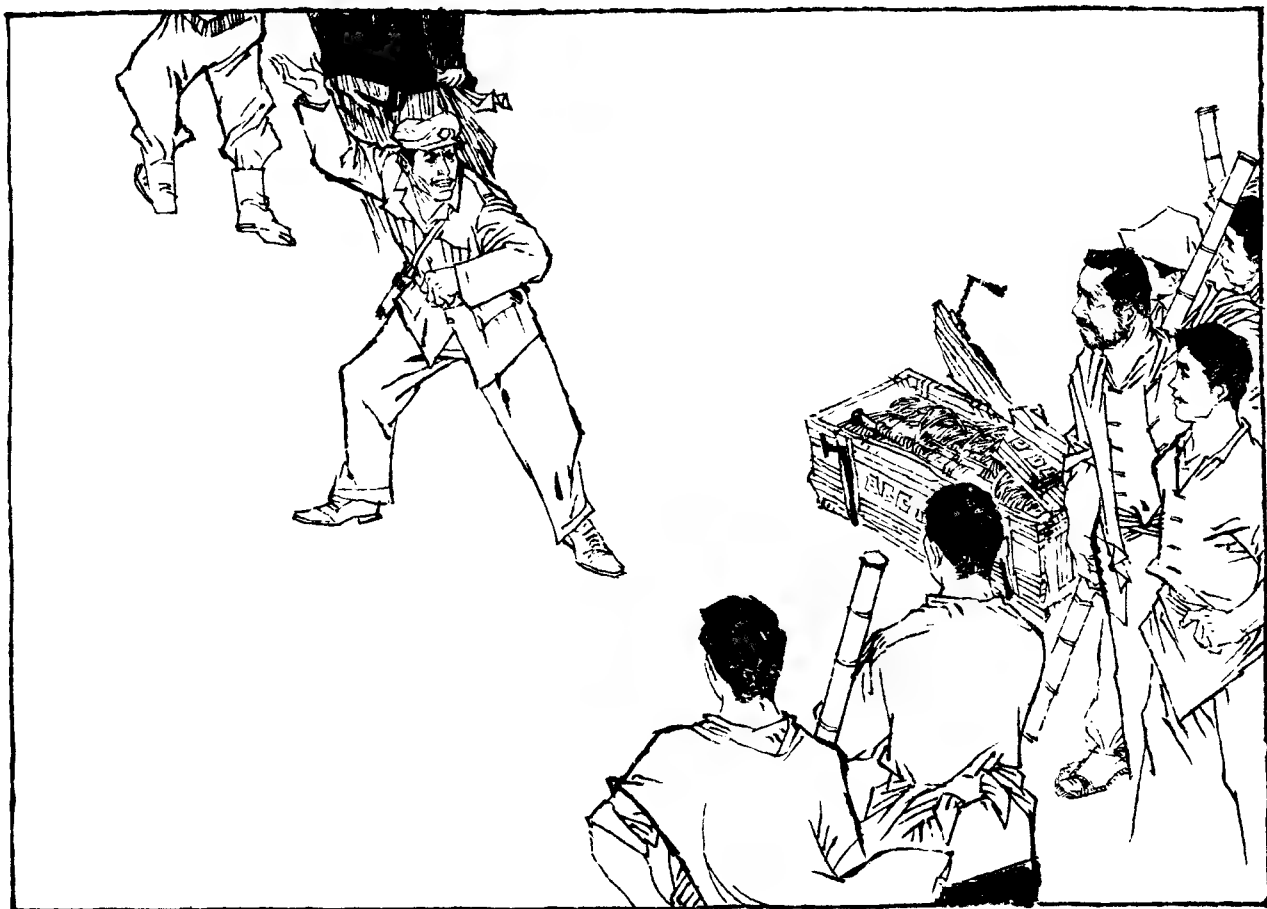
25. He'd just heard the P.L.A. was about to cross the Yangtze. He had to ship out these arms, but time was running out, so smiling ingratiatingly he said: "Please, calm down. Revealing military secrets is a punishable offence, but since you've all pleaded . . . I think first. . . ."



26. "First arrest him!" Whiskers Wang interjected. There was renewed uproar among the dockers and the commander glanced at Wang, cursing him under his breath. Then wagging his finger he said: "No, no, I mean, first we must get the loading done."



27. "The crates are not strong enough. We're not loading them." Iron Man Cheng responded firmly. "That's right, we won't," his mates backed him up. Feeling that things were getting too hot for him, the commander said unwillingly, "Very well, since you say they're no good, we'll drop it."



28. He ordered his men onto the trucks and looking back he said threateningly to Cheng: "Well, you're a fine fellow, ready to speak your mind — I admire you. One of these days I'll be back to see you."

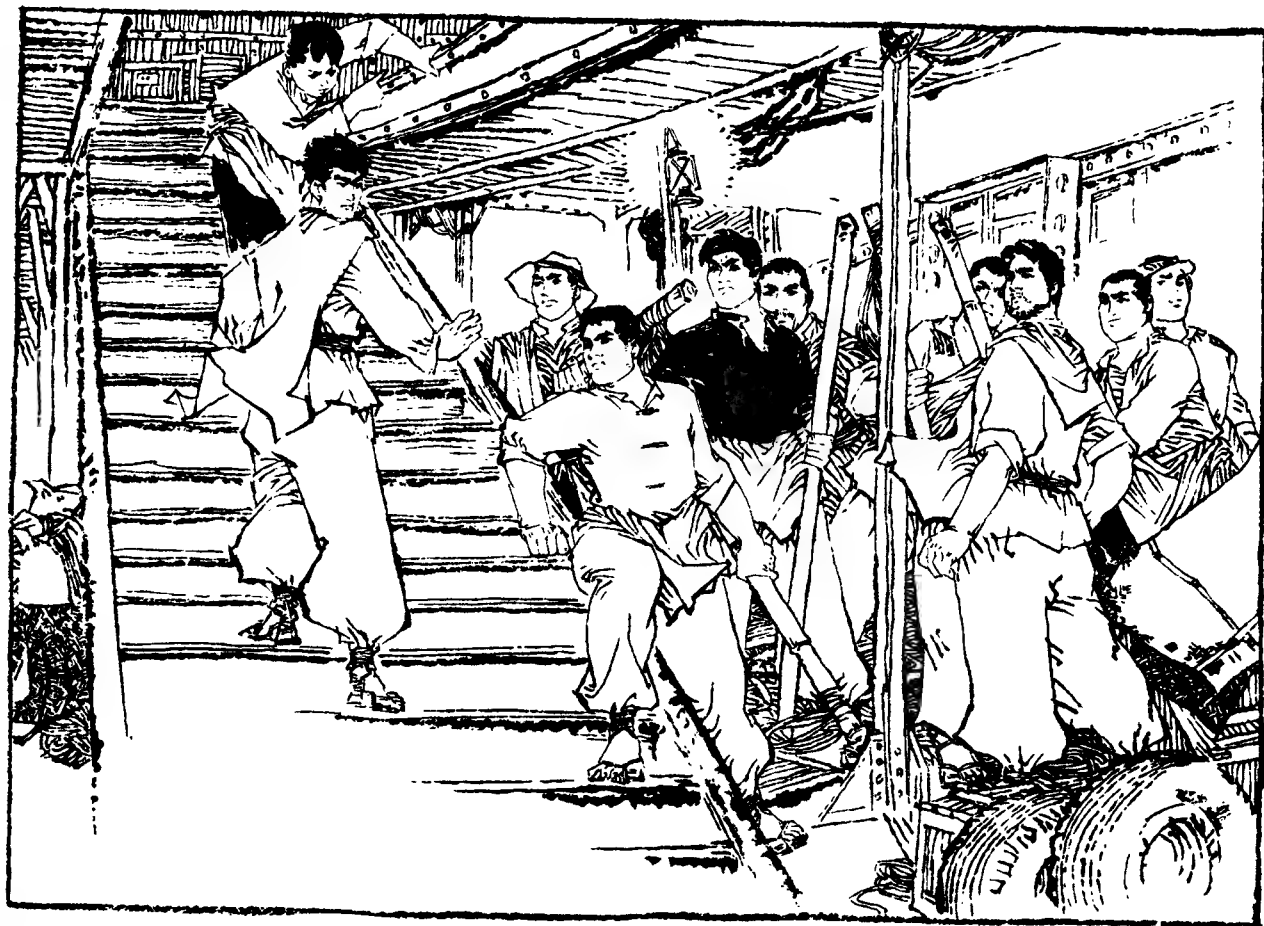
"You'll be welcome. We dockers are all the same."



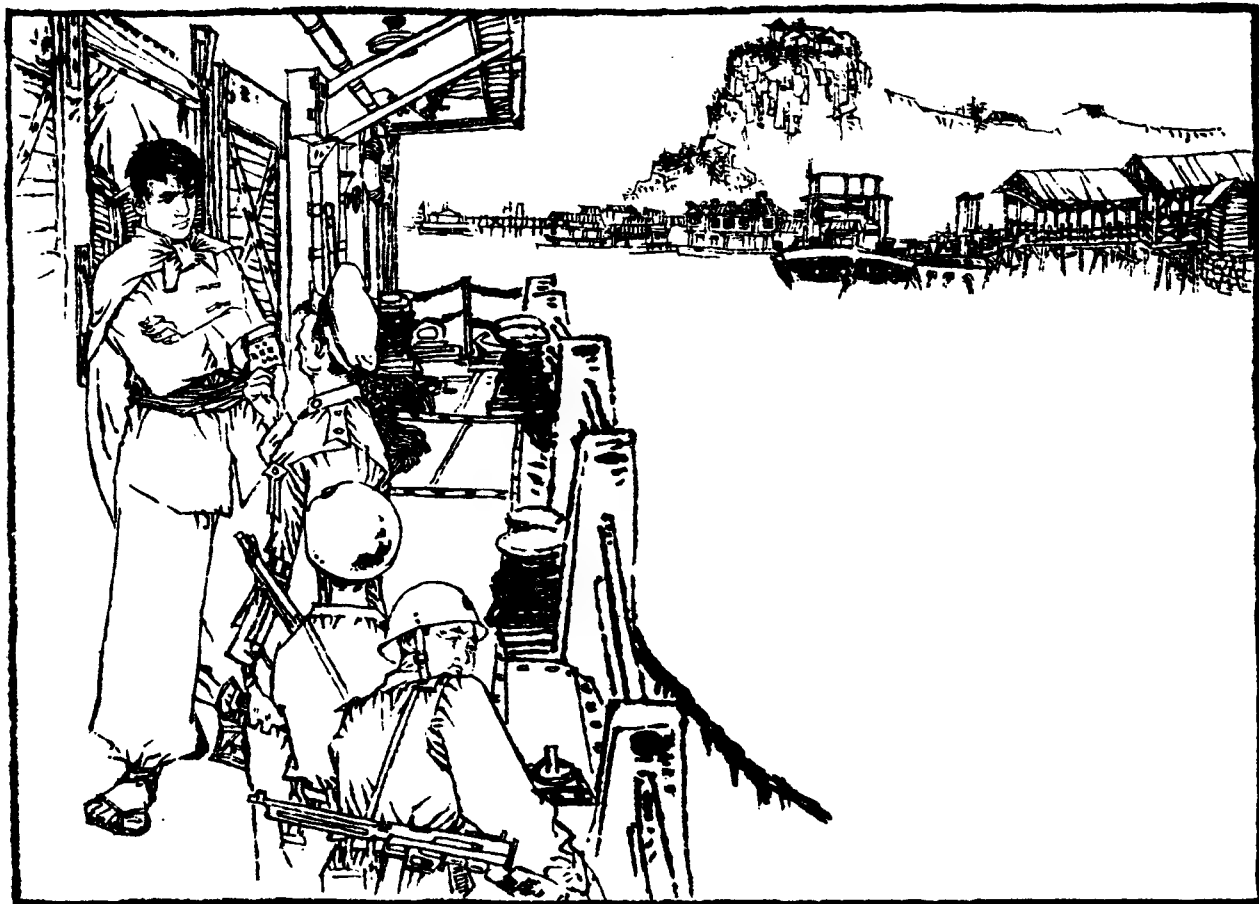
29. Scared to say any more, the commander clambered into the truck and fled, humiliated. Watching, the dockers laughed triumphantly.



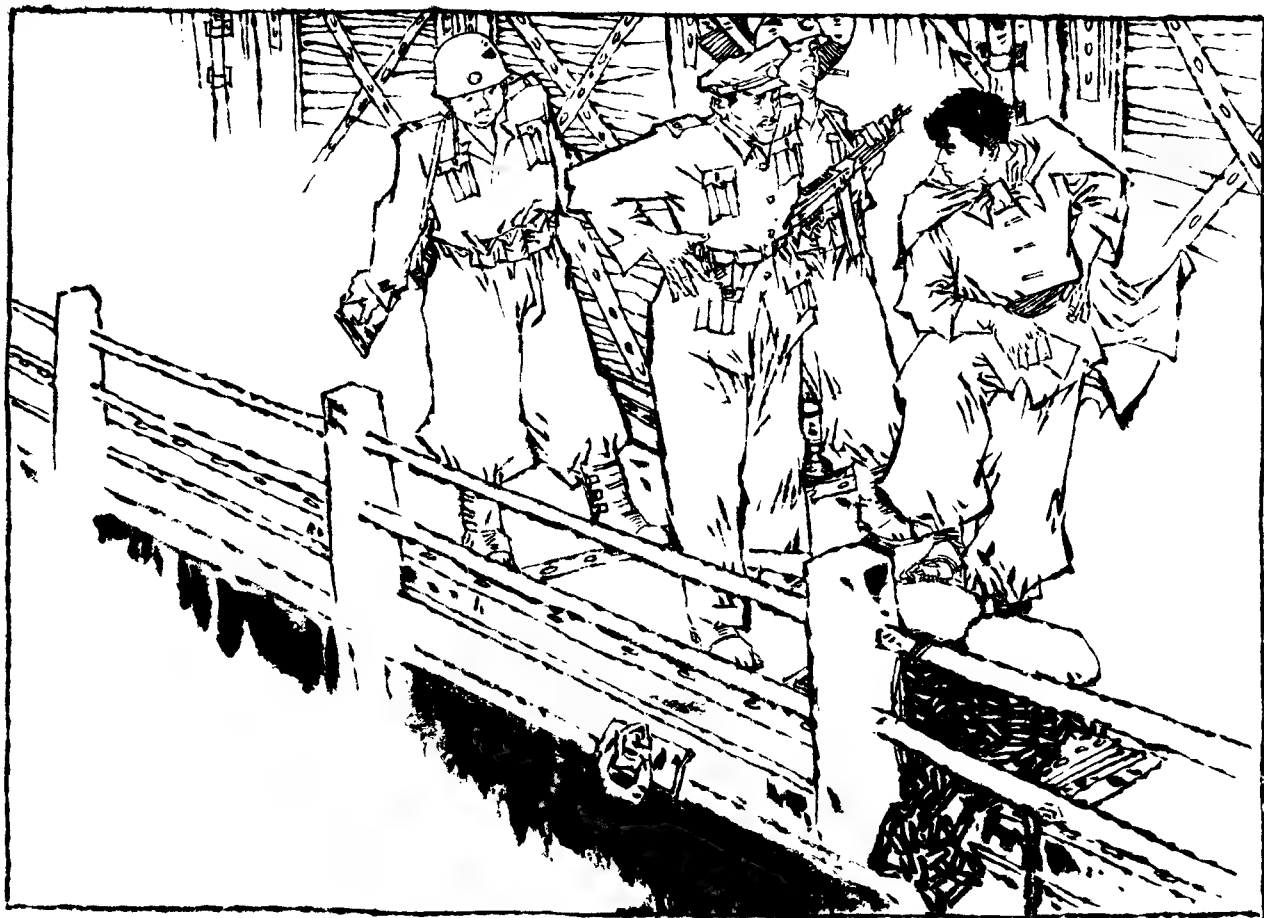
30. That night, the dockers gathered round a storm lantern in the No. I hold of a lighter to talk over the incident. One of them asked: "What if the enemy try to ship out those arms through another port?" Heitze thought: "That's true, we can't let those guns slip through our hands now."



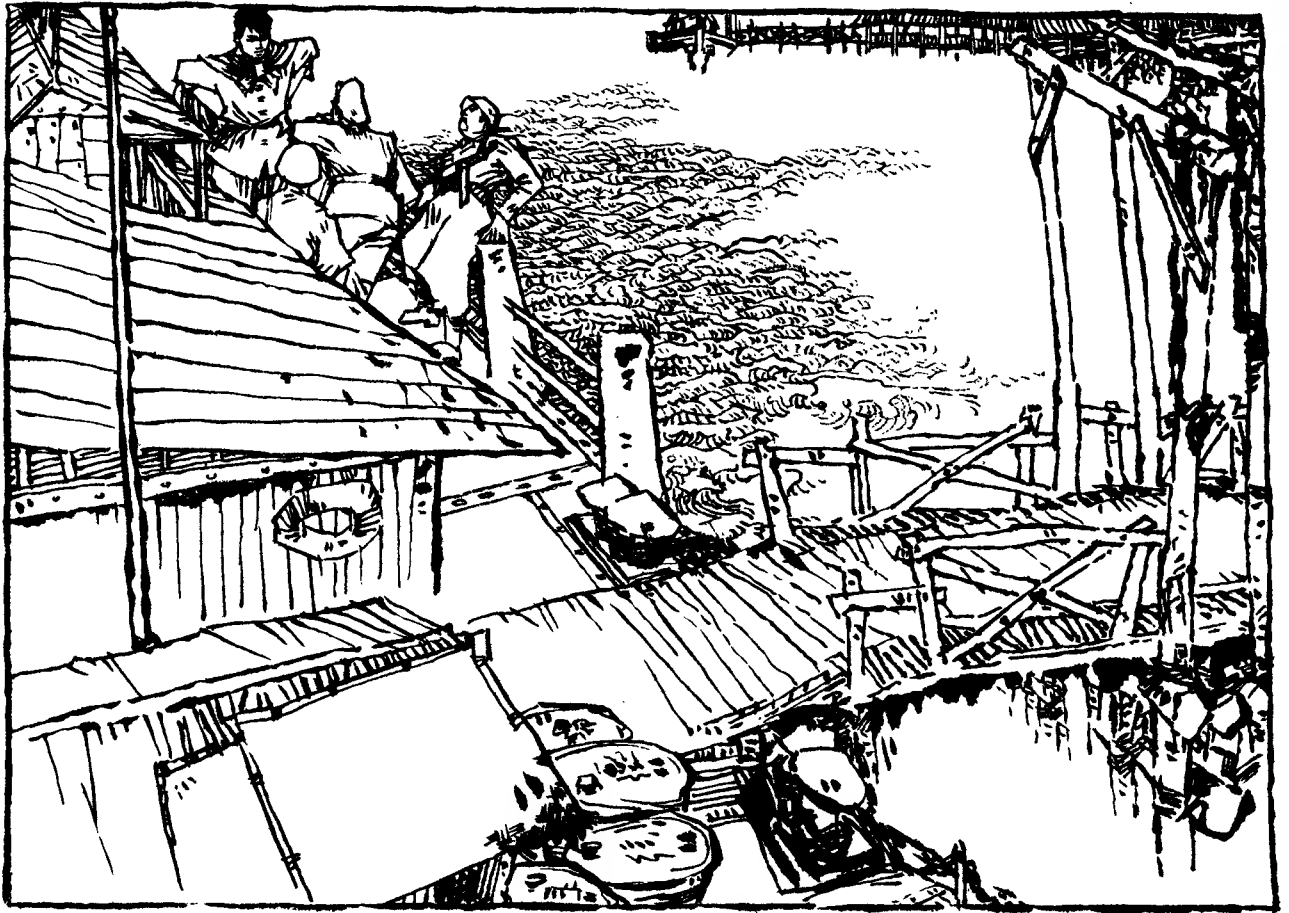
31. Suddenly a docker hurried in with the news that an enemy staff officer was approaching with some orderlies. "So the arms haven't been shipped out yet," Heitze thought. He immediately got the men ready for a struggle.



32. The enemy officer came aboard and holding out a visiting card to Heitze he said: "I've brought a friendly invitation for Iron Man Cheng. He's to come to our H.Q. at Yuntai Park for dinner and a chat."



33. "A friendly invitation? What would an unfriendly one be?" Heitze asked coldly. "An unfriendly one?" The officer fingered the pistol at his waist, "That wouldn't be so pretty."



34. Heitze threw the card on the deck and putting his hands on his hips he declared.
“Well, friendly or not, he’s not going.”



35. His movement was a signal to the other dockers, and they swarmed up out of the hold, disarming the enemy soldiers before they had time to draw.



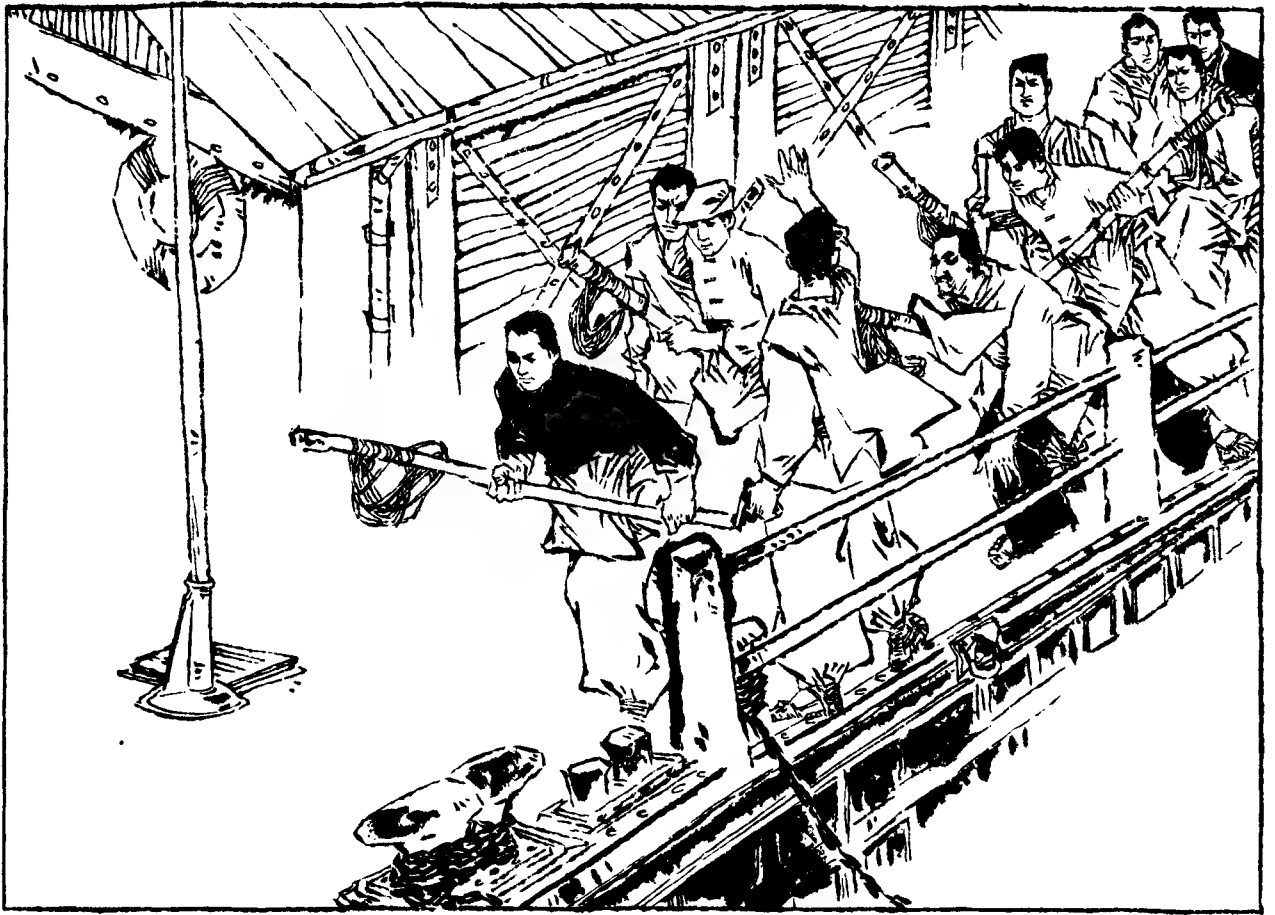
36. "Now," Heitze shouted, "where are the crates of arms?" "I don't know," the officer answered. Heitze tapped his head with a gun and said, "You've got to talk. Is it to be friendly or unfriendly?"



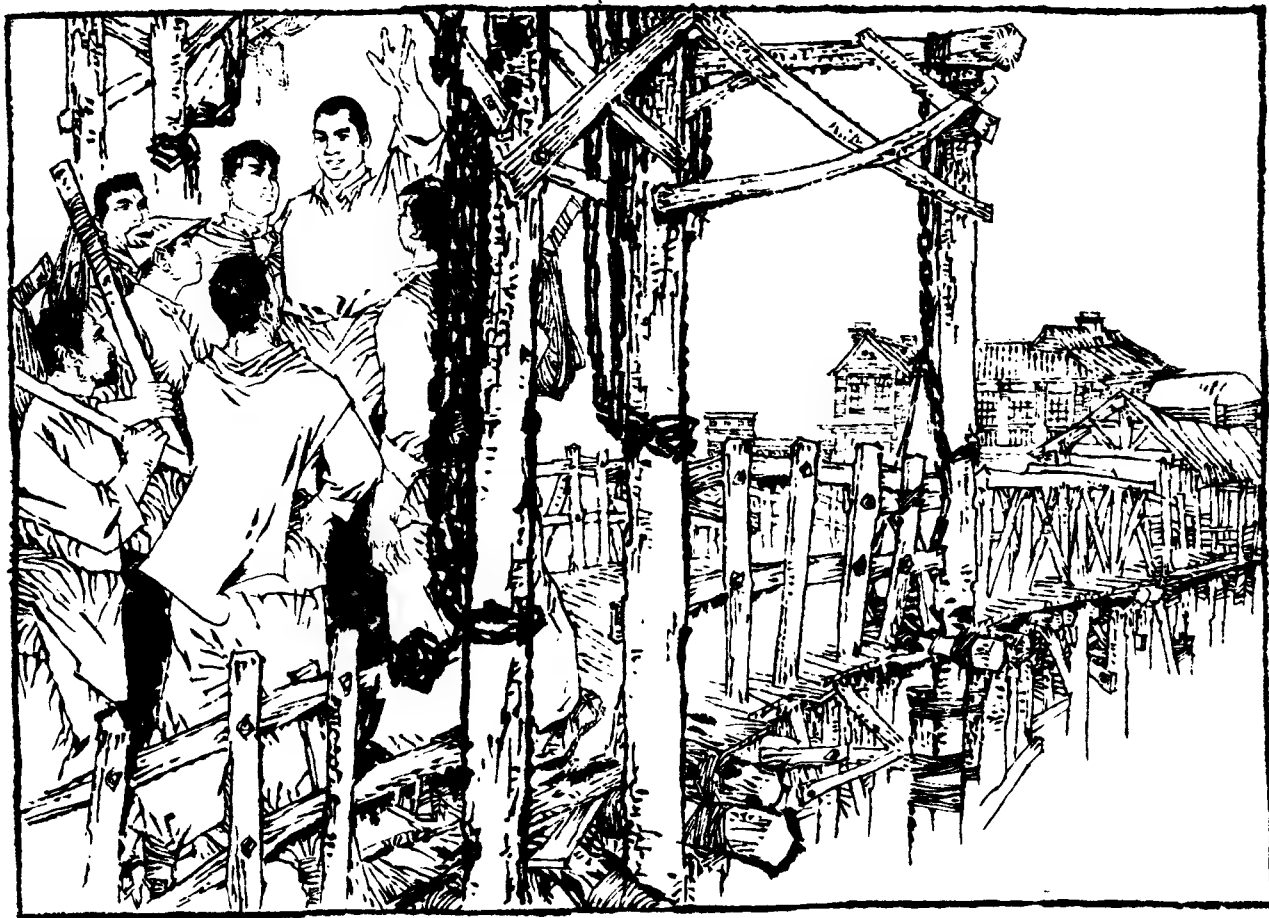
37. The officer felt his legs turn to jelly and they folded under him, "Let's be friendly. I'll talk. The guns are still on the trucks. They're parked at our H.Q. at Yuntai Park."



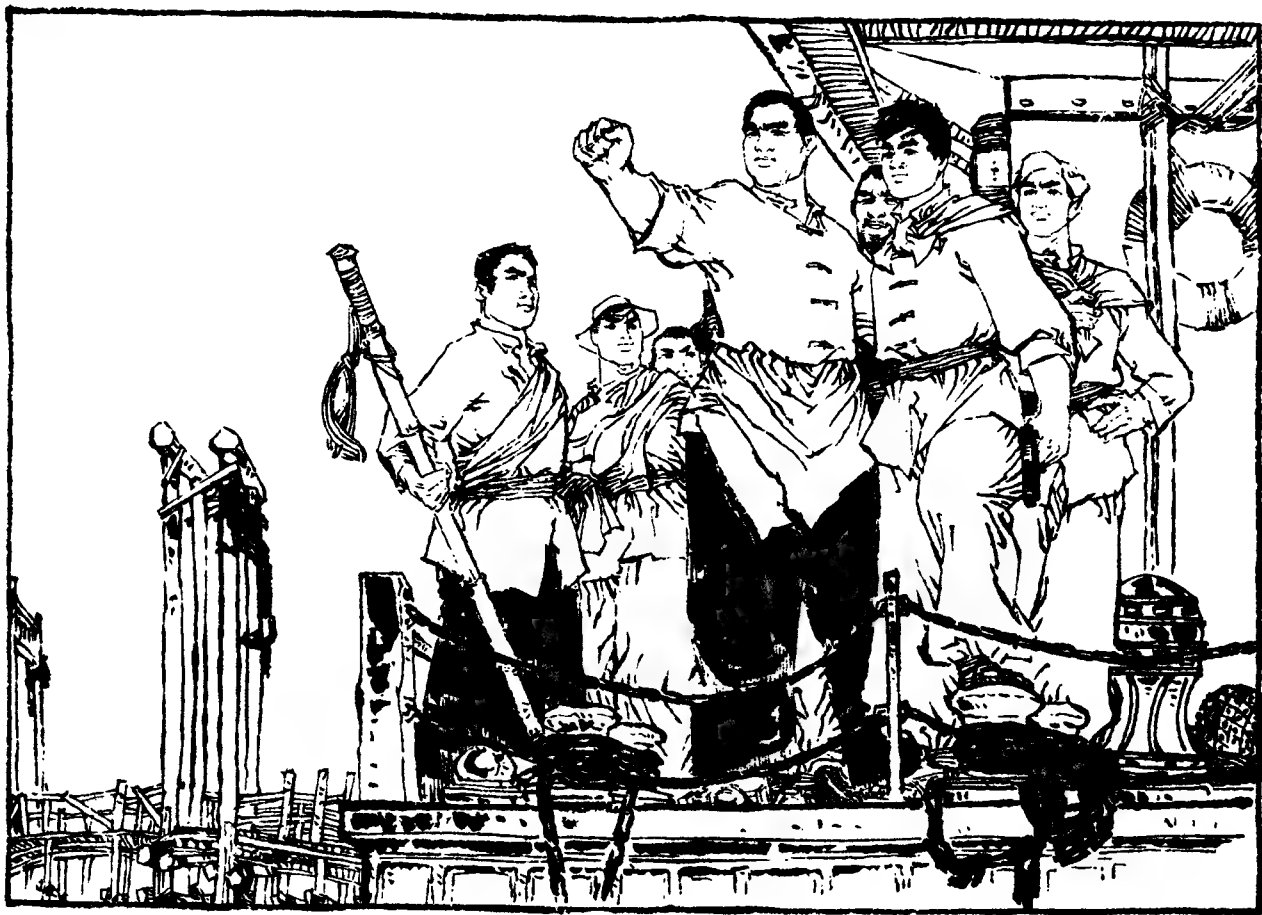
38. After the dockers had locked up the enemy officer and his orderlies in another hold, they all crowded round Heitze eagerly asking what they should do next.



39. Heitze waved them on crying, "Come on, let's go and get the guns." "Right, let's go," they all responded, taking up their carrying poles.



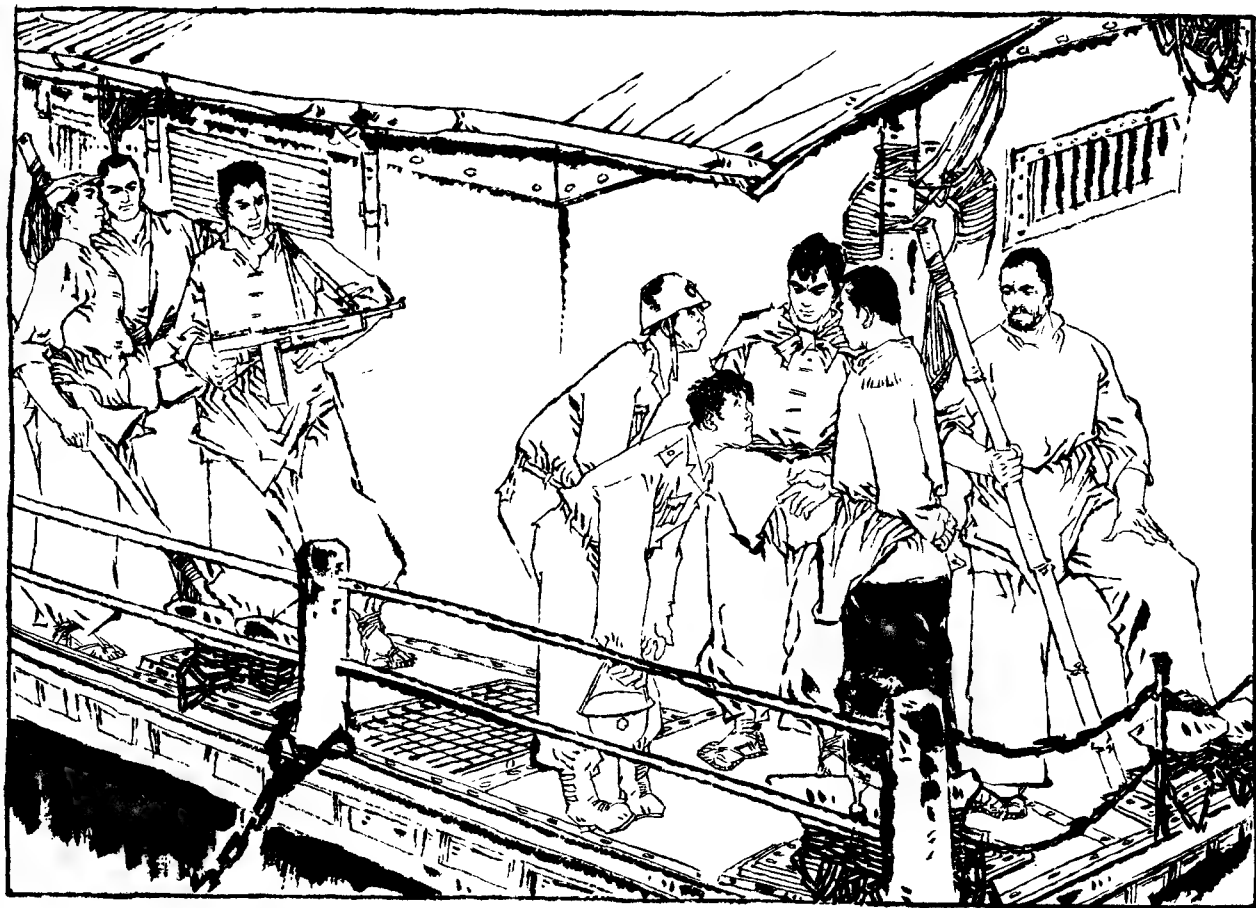
40. But when they reached the jetty head, they met Iron Man Cheng who barred their way with outstretched arms and asked, "Where are you going?" When he heard what they intended to do he said gravely, "Our orders are to defend the docks. We should stick to our posts. Let's all go back."



41. The dockers stared at Cheng. "How about the rifles? Aren't we going to get them back?" they demanded. "Yes, we are," Cheng reassured them. "The enemy won't get them out. Don't you worry."



42. Heitze picked up the visiting card which he had thrown down. "Just now the enemy H.Q. sent three men round to invite you to dinner." Not surprised by such a trick, Cheng simply said to Heitze: "O.K. Now first bring the two enemy orderlies here."



43. When they came he said, "You may go. Tell your commander that I'll be over soon. As for the officer, we'll keep him to act as the guide."



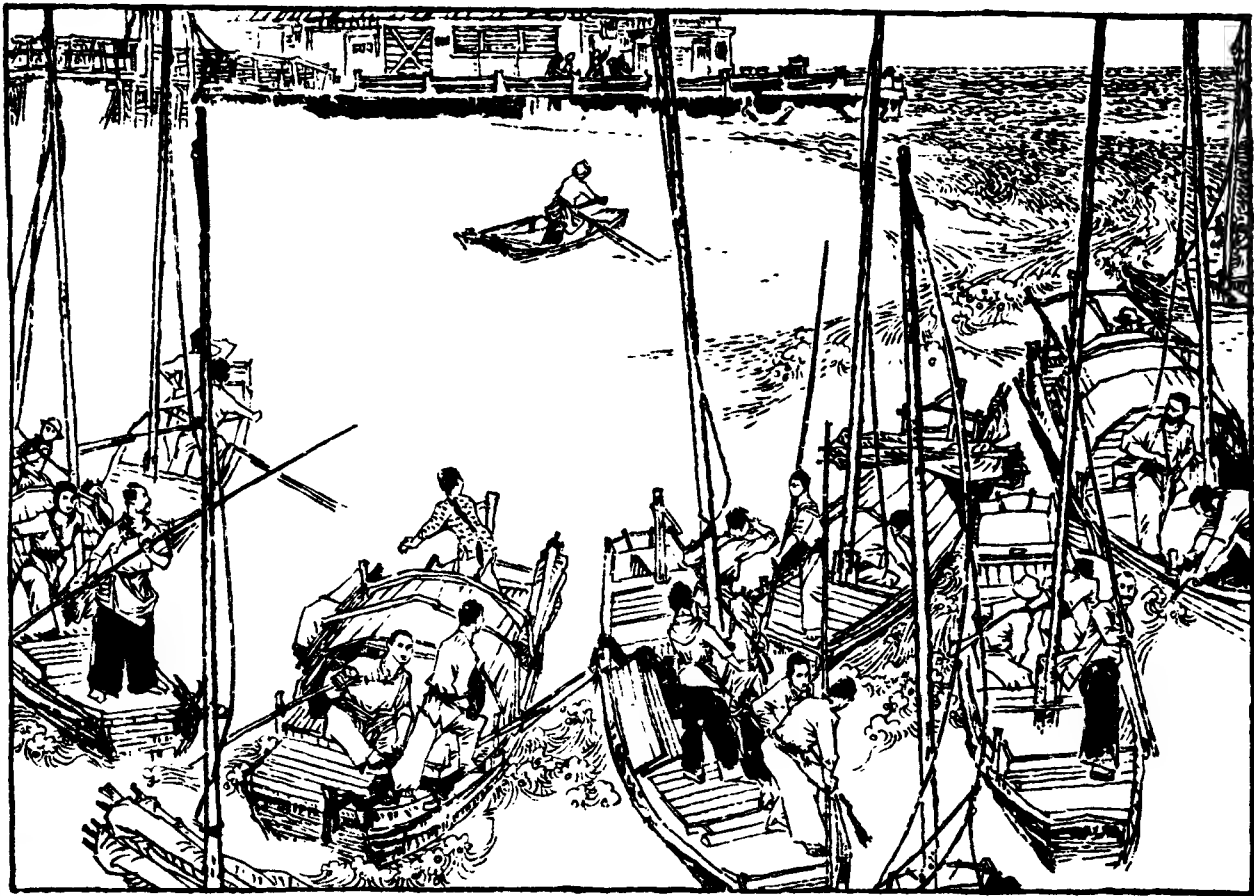
44. Heitze wanted to know what he was doing. Chuckling, Cheng explained: "We've been warned that the enemy are trying to lure us away from the docks so as to ship out the rifles. That's why they invited me to dinner. If we went to get back the arms we'd be falling right into their trap."



45. Heitze thought for a minute and asked: "Suppose they ship them out through other ports, then what?" "They can't. Our militiamen and guerrilla fighters are guarding every port around here," Cheng assured him. Elated, the dockers asked him to decide what they should do next.



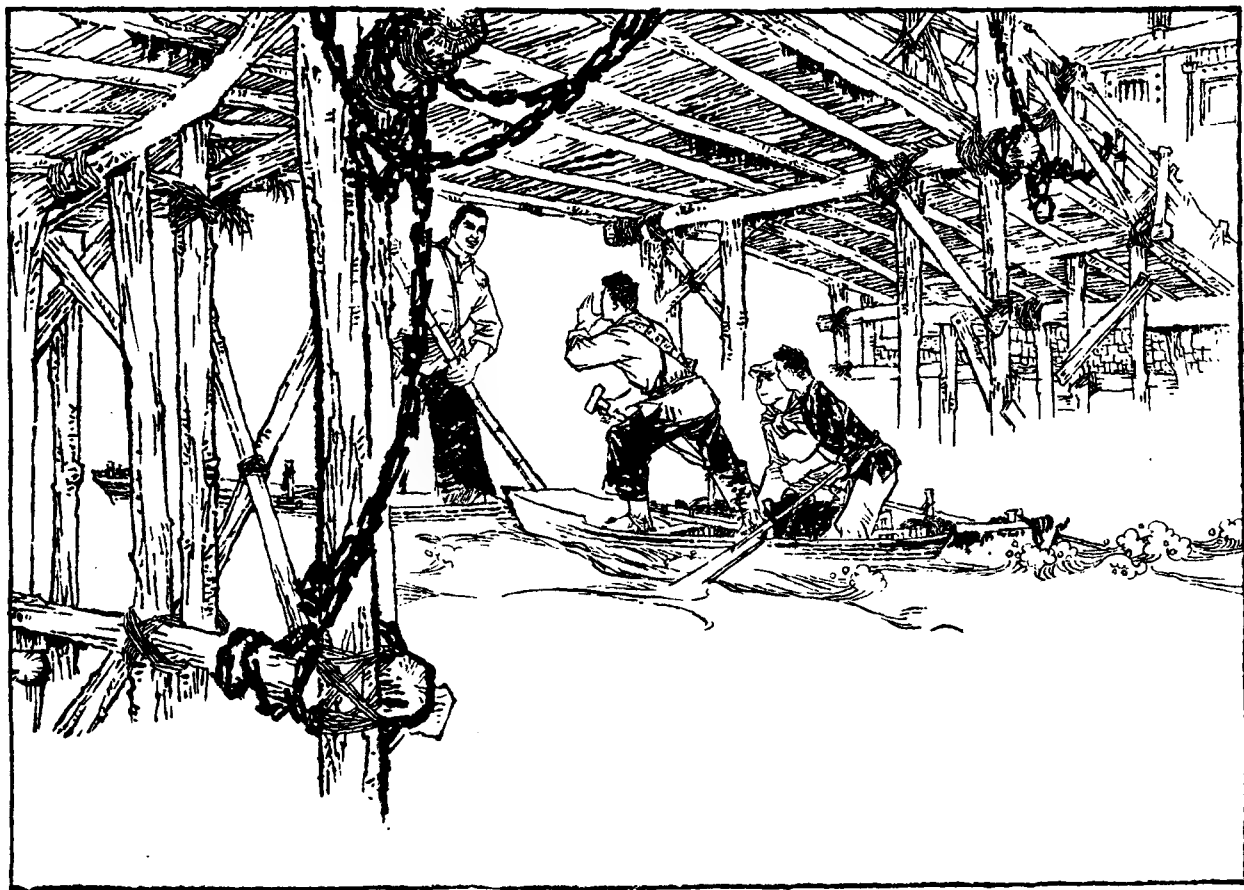
46. "Let everyone say what he thinks and then we'll decide." As he listened to his mates, Cheng sucked at his pipe. Finally he said: "Good, we'll do as you suggest. Since the enemy are trying to lure the tigers away from the mountains, we might as well get them in their own trap. Everyone to his post!"



47. The dockers got busy. Under the jetty and on the lighter, people were bustling around; fishing boats were taken from their moorings.



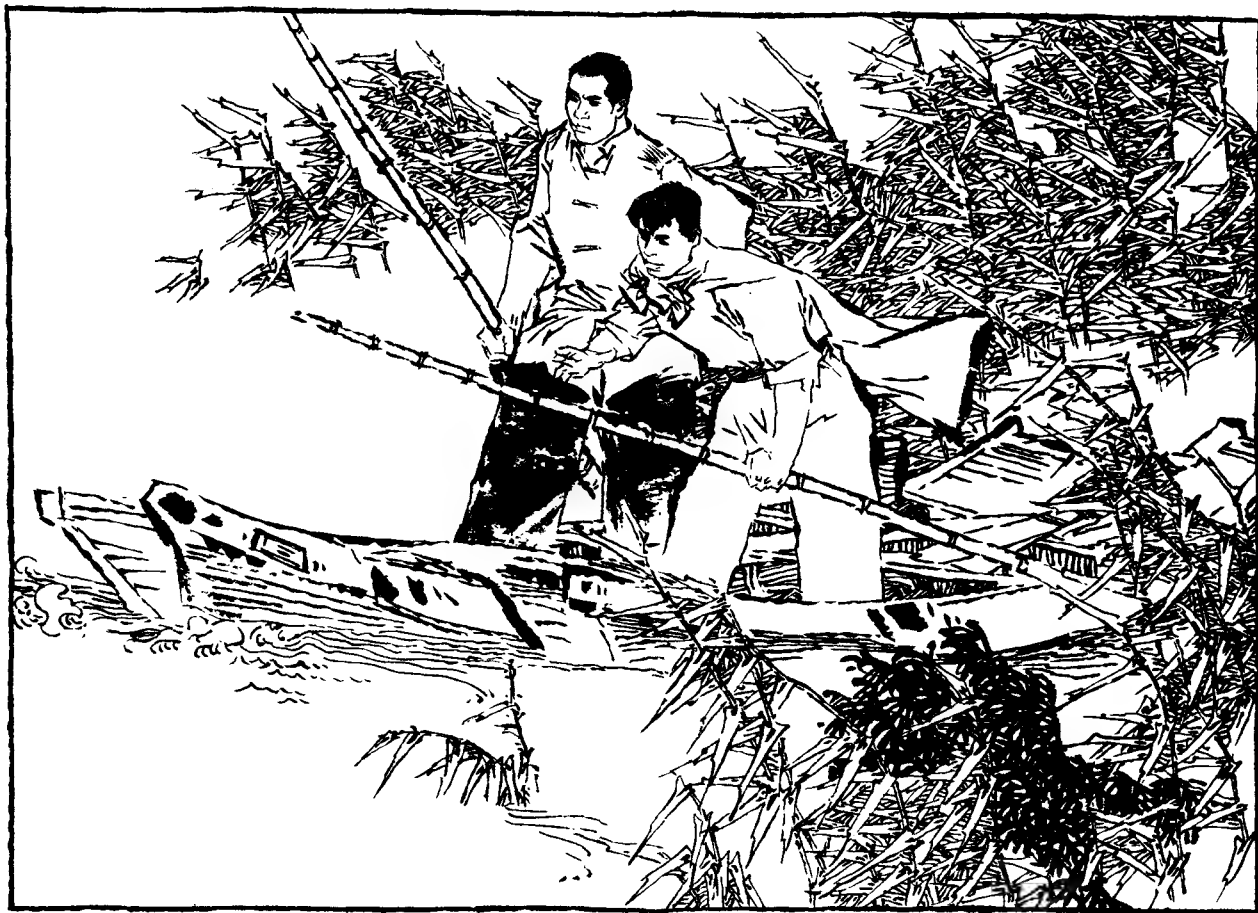
48. On the dark river, Iron Man Cheng punted a boat up and down around the docks to see that everything was going smoothly.



49. When he reached the jetty, the dockers rowed their boats out from where they were hidden to meet him whispering, "Everything's ready."



50. Just then a boat shot out from among the reeds by the river bank — it was Heitze returning from his mission. He called to Cheng: "We've got the enemy guarding all the boats. Our boats are waiting in the reeds over there."



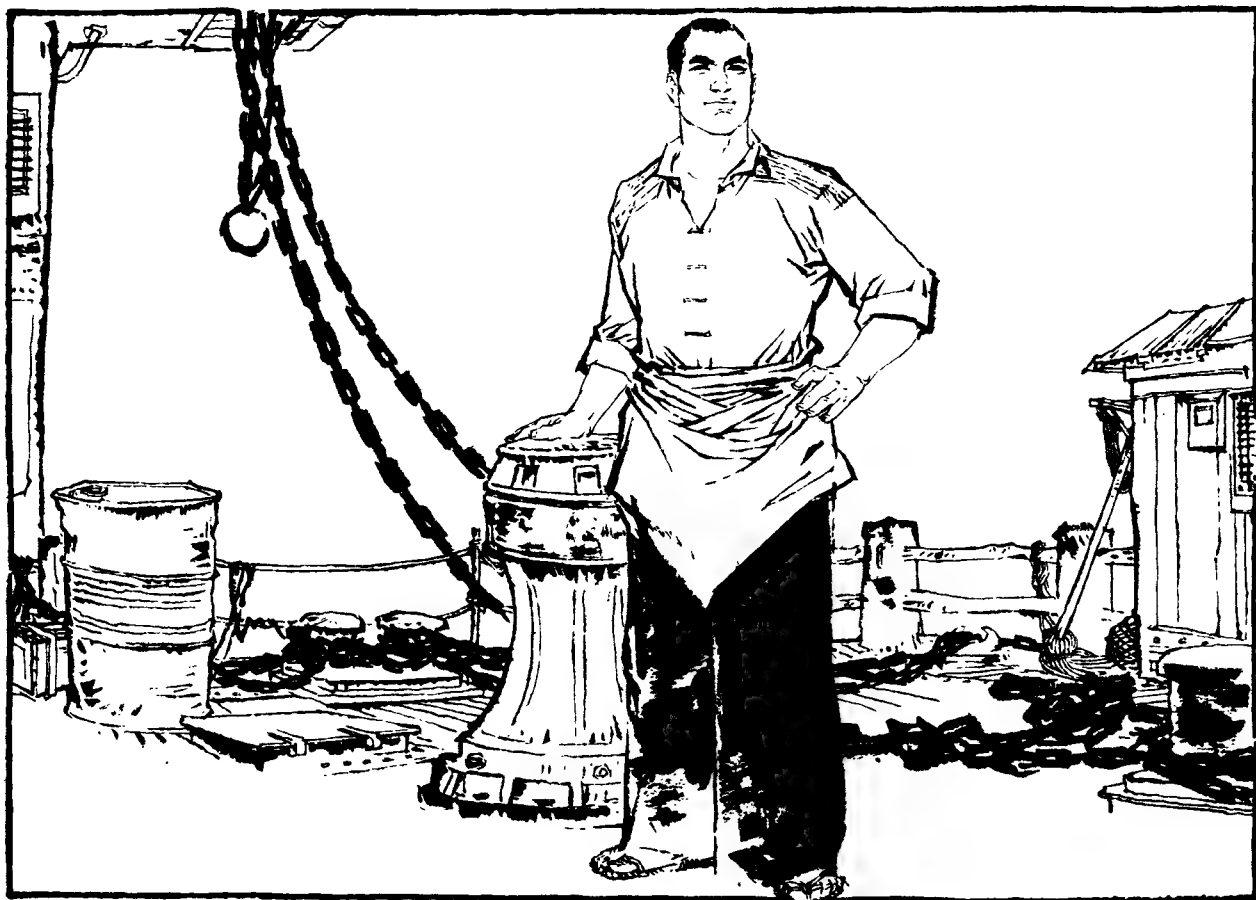
51. Iron Man Cheng asked: "Have the fishing nets and rice stalks been spread in the river?" Pointing to the midstream, Heitze replied: "Yes, in the main channel there. Now, the enemy are fish in our net. They can't escape."



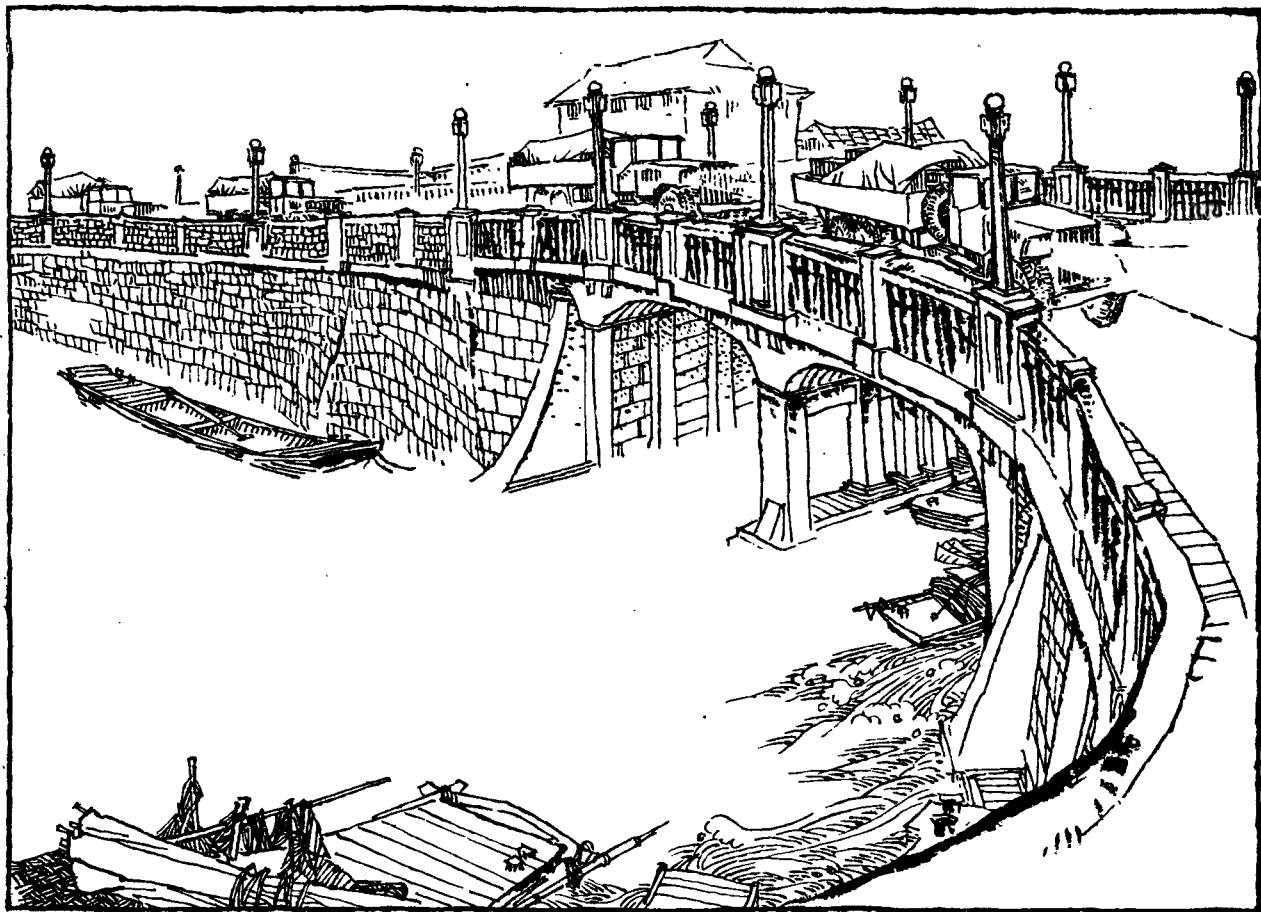
52. Looking at the rising tide, Cheng frowned and said: "There's a high tide tonight. The fish might slip from our net if they don't take the main channel."



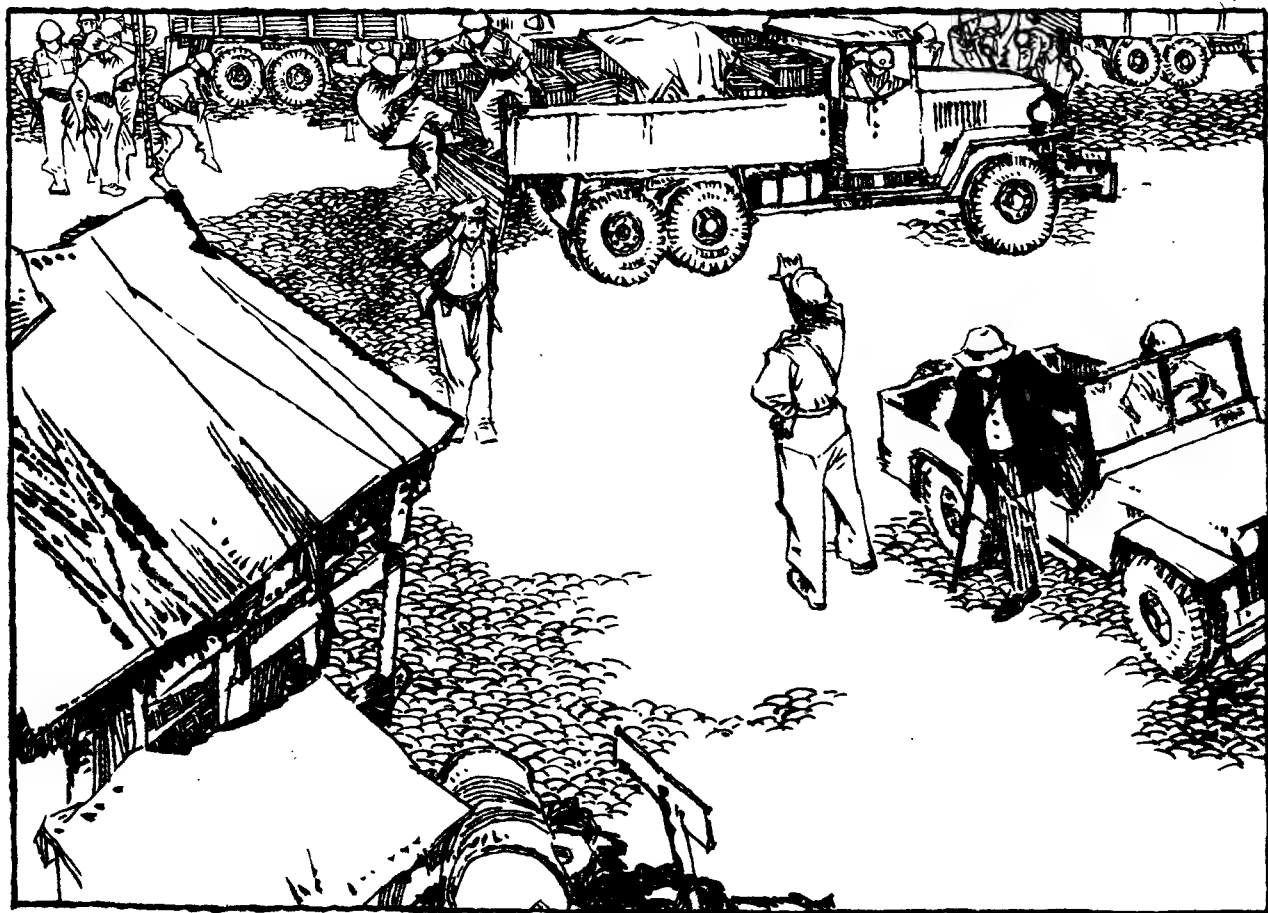
53. "What shall we do?" Heitze was worried. "Spread nets and stalks on both sides of the main channel as well," Cheng replied. "Right." Punting his boat Heitze soon disappeared into the mist.



54. Cheng stood alone looking at the surging waves, his heart swelling as he thought: Tonight we dockers will seize the arms and ammunition from the enemy, we'll take back the Chinkiang docks for the people and welcome our beloved People's Liberation Army.



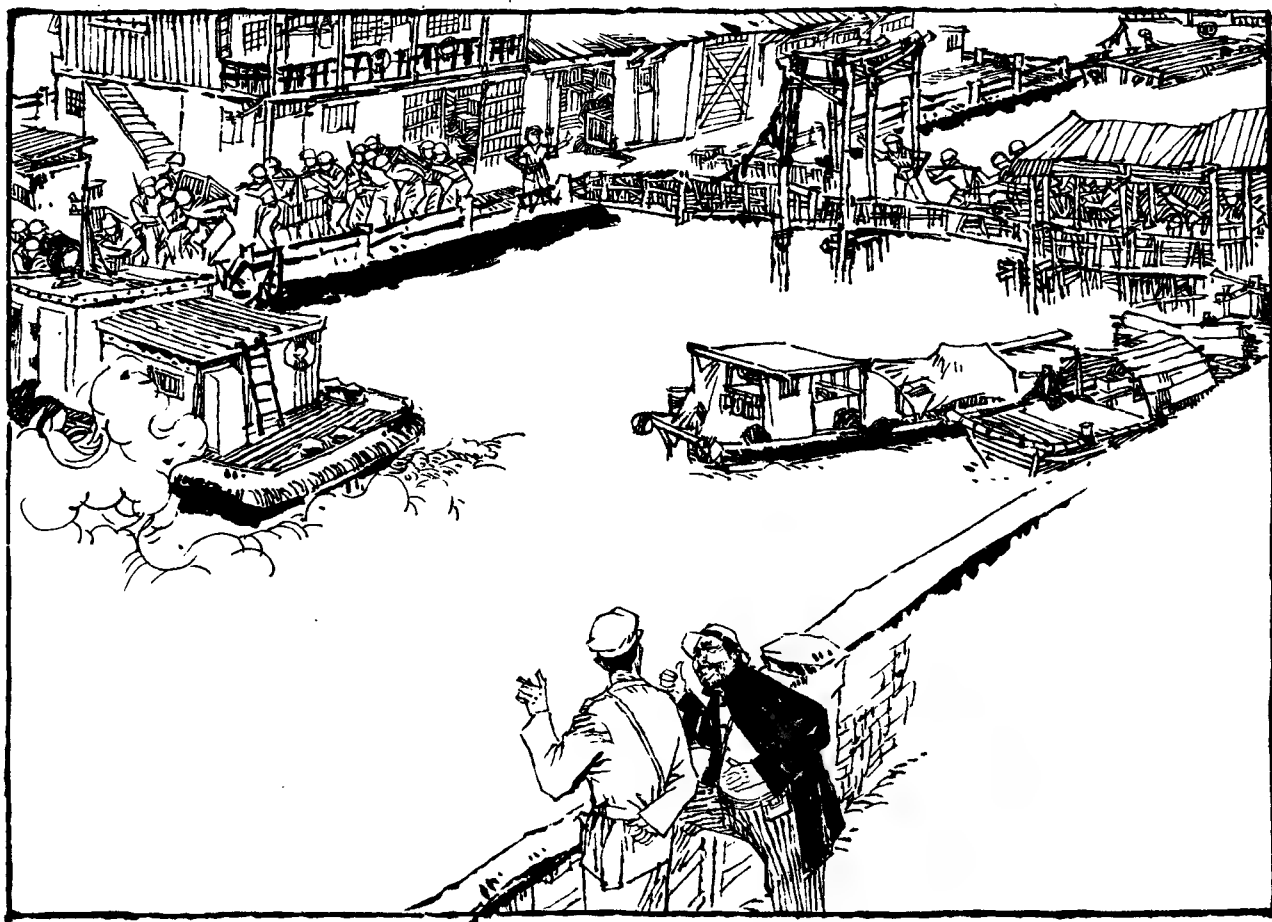
55. Several trucks roared towards the docks. He knew they had a fierce battle before them.



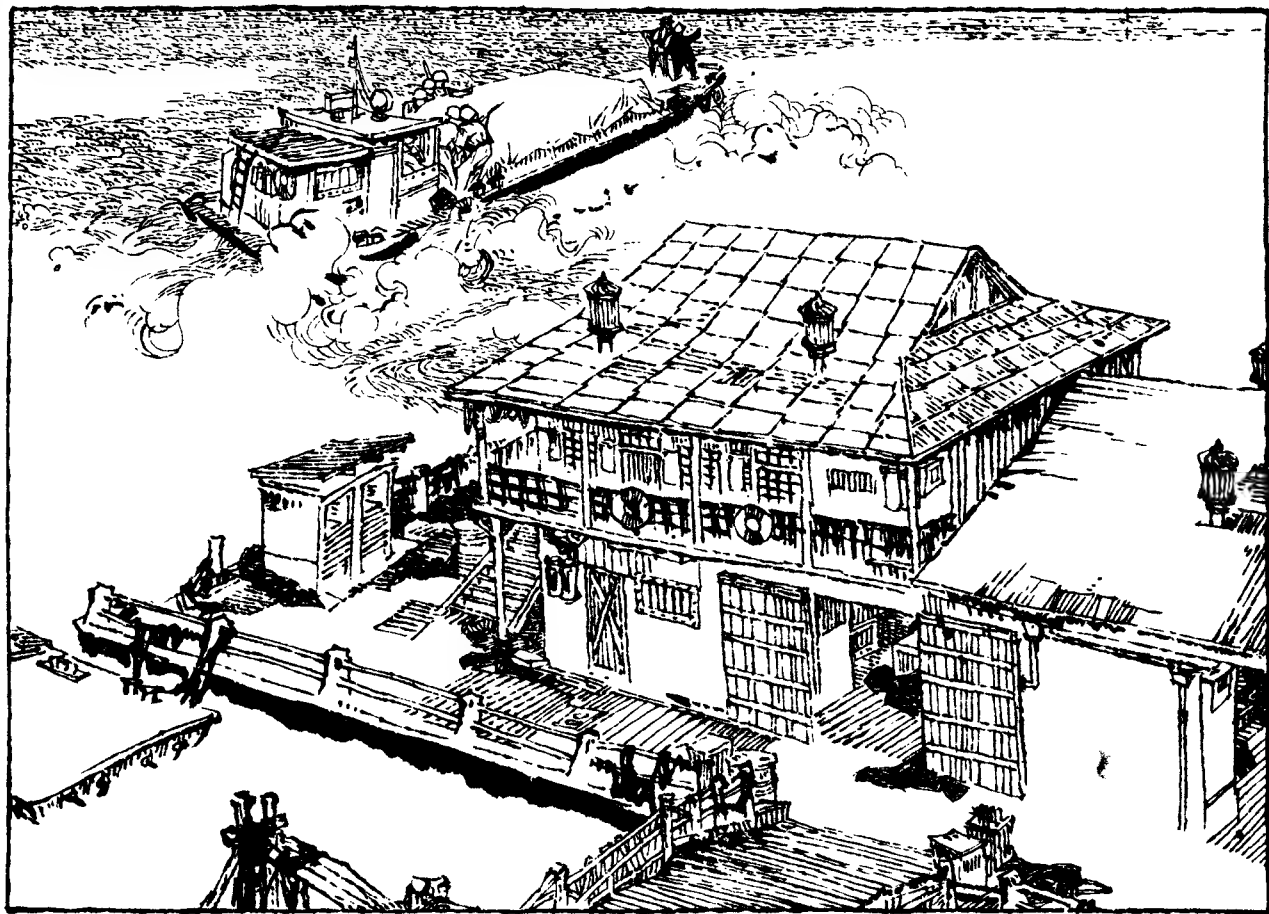
56. The trucks stopped at the dock gate. Two men got out of a jeep — the Chin-kiang garrison commander and Whiskers Wang.



57. The enemy commander ordered his men to unload the crates from the trucks and carry them to the steamer at the dockside.



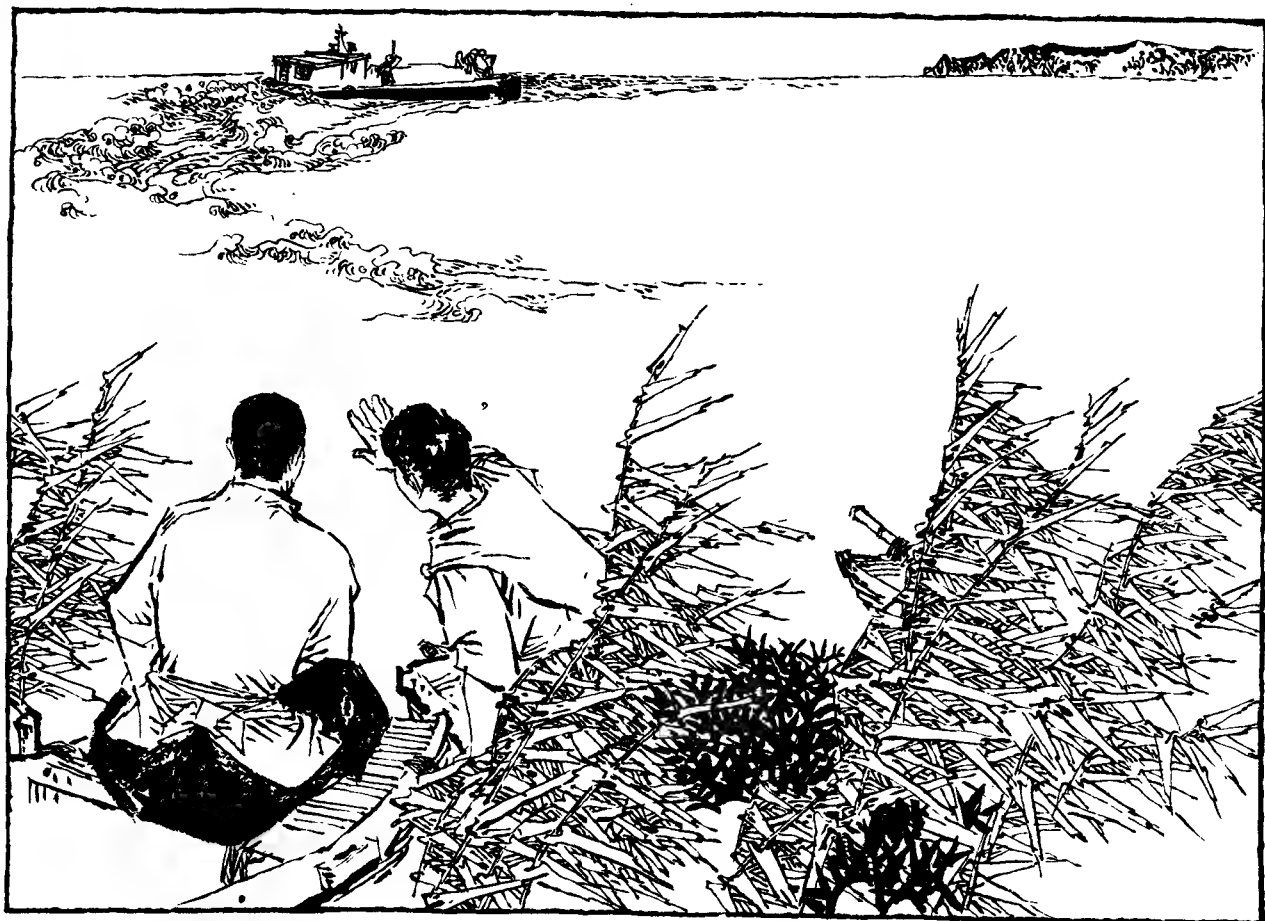
58. There was not a docker to be seen. Assuming that they had all followed Iron Man Cheng to the Yuntai Park, the enemy commander was exultant at his own cleverness. Whiskers Wang gave him the thumbs up and praised him loudly.



59. The steamer was soon loaded and sped towards the midstream, the two men standing proudly on its fore deck.



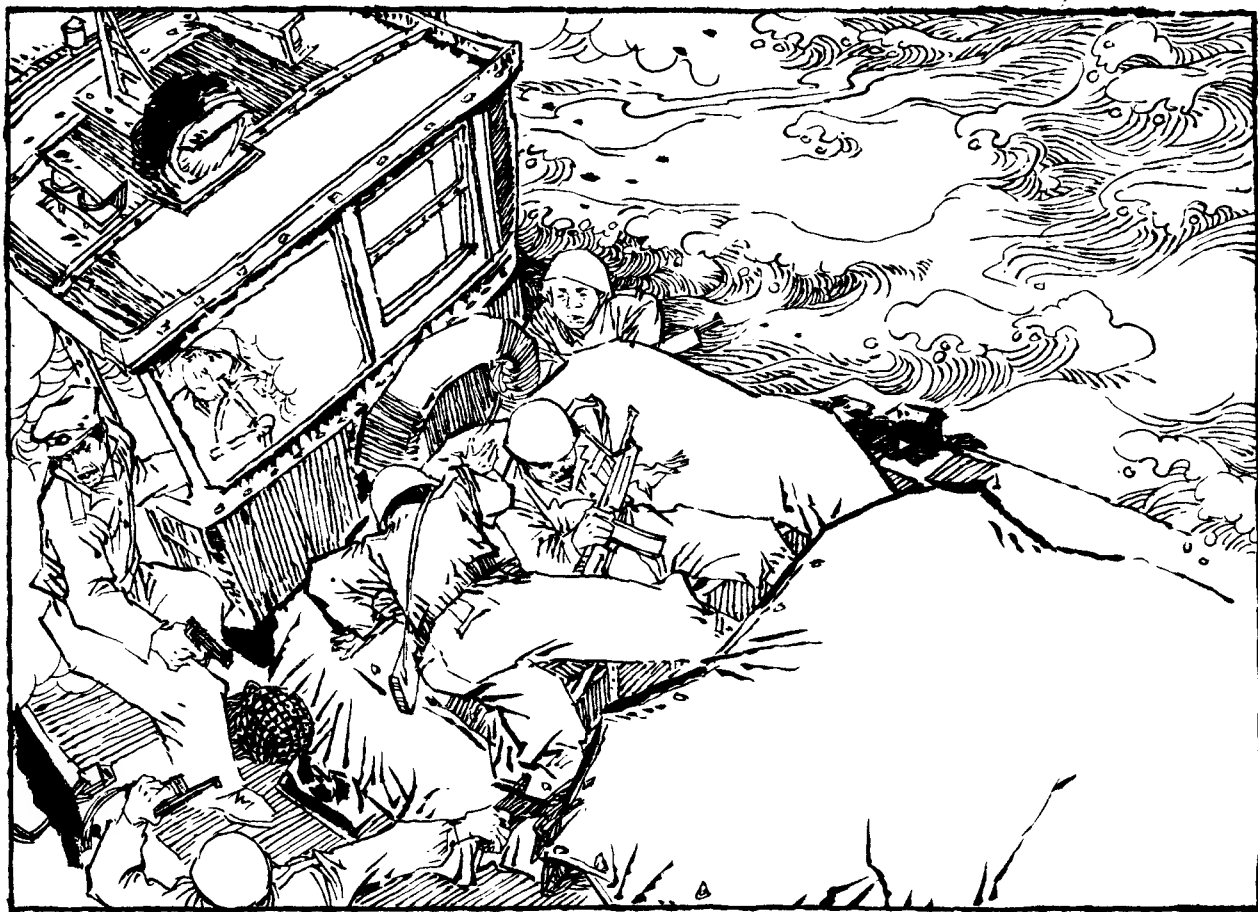
60. The waves surged higher and higher. Just when it was about to reach the main channel, the boat suddenly altered course to starboard. Cheng and Heitze hiding among the reeds exclaimed together: "The fox!"



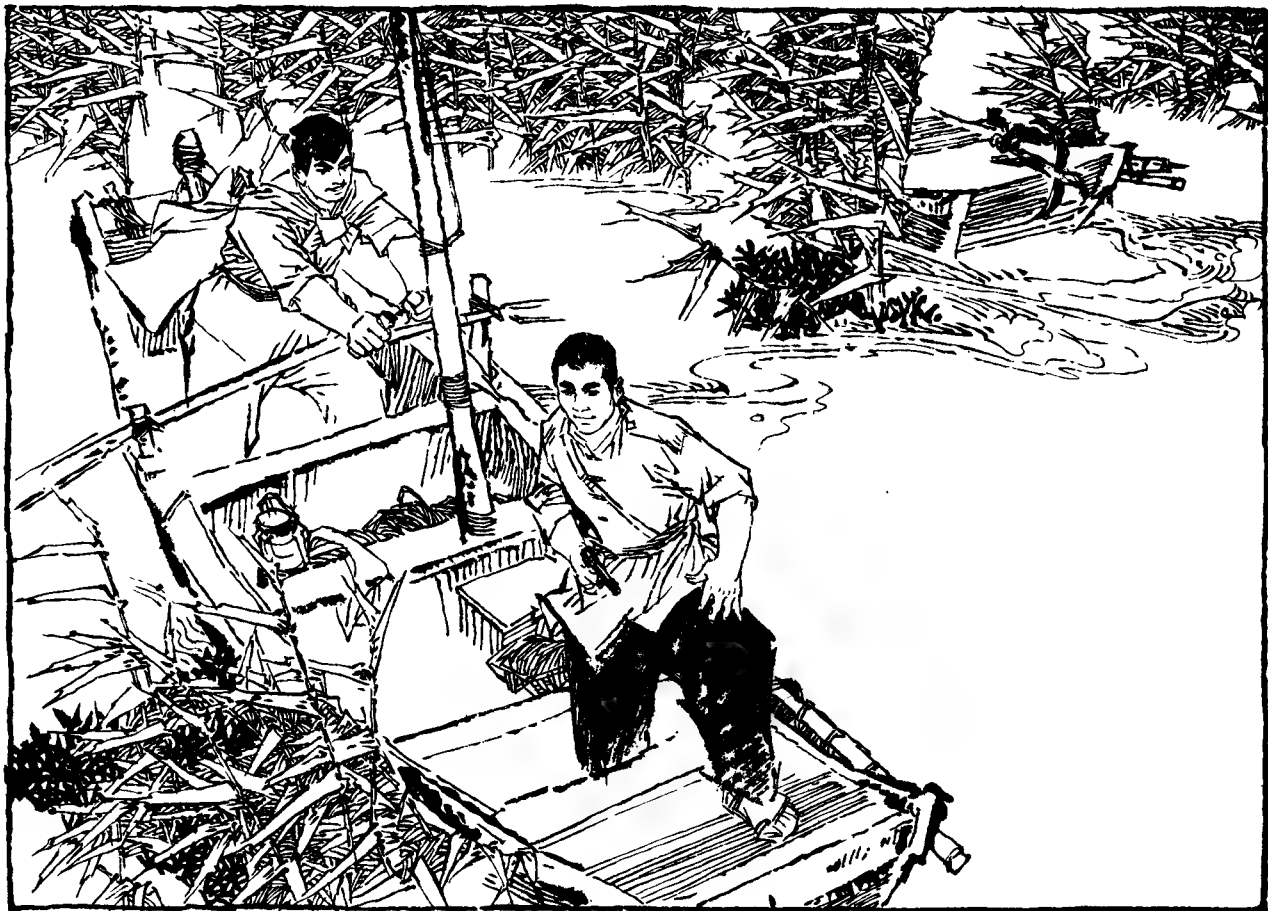
61. But it soon pulled into the midstream. Suddenly its horn honked twice, it span round and round and then stood still. Grabbing at Cheng's hand, Heitze cried excitedly: "Got it, we've got it!"



62. The enemy commander panicked. He shrieked: "What's wrong? What's happened?" He didn't know of course that the propeller had got entangled in a mass of nets and stalks.



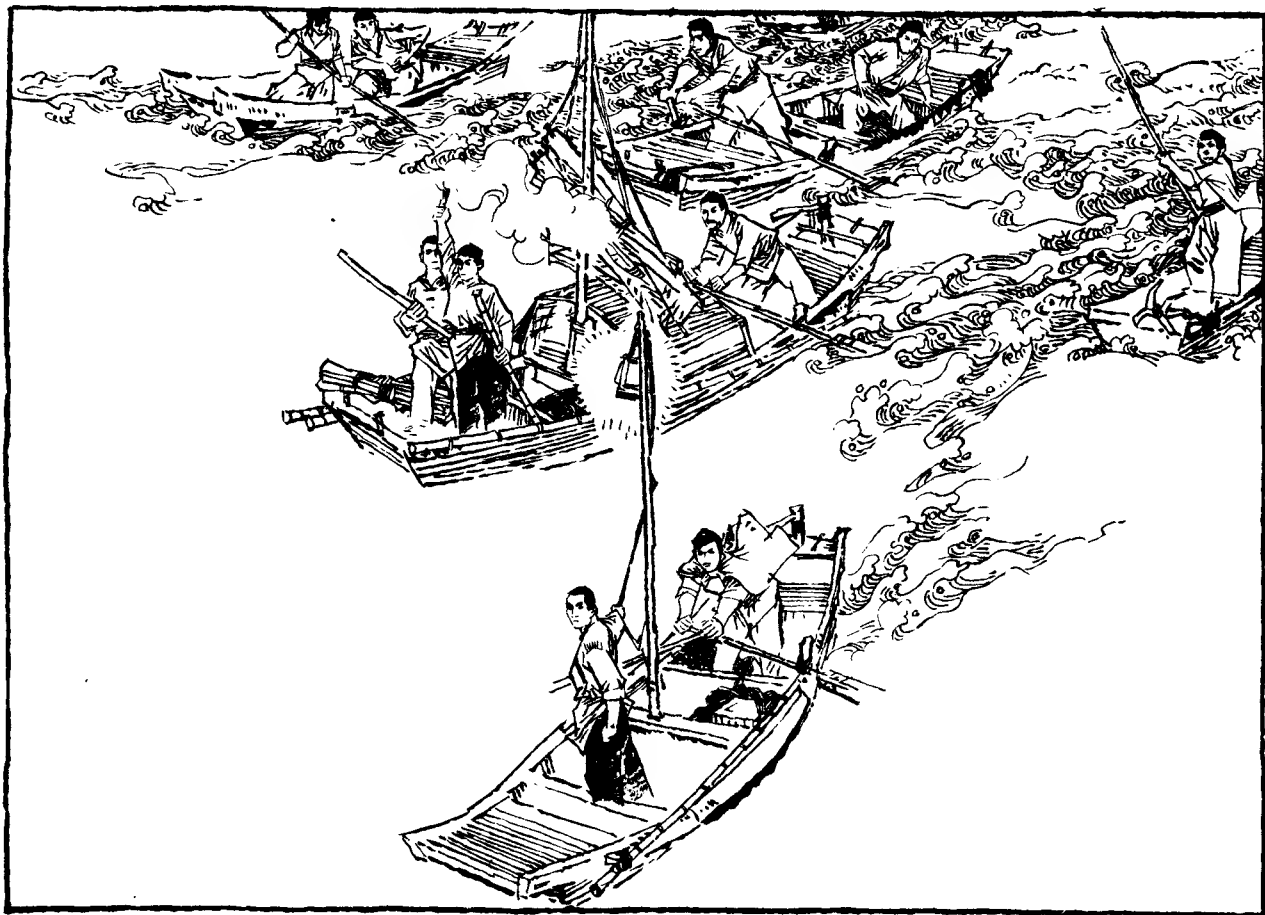
63. The steamer was borne up onto the crest of a wave and then dropped again. On the deck, the enemy commander could hardly keep his feet. Drawing his pistol, he shrilled: "Signal. Communicate with H.Q."



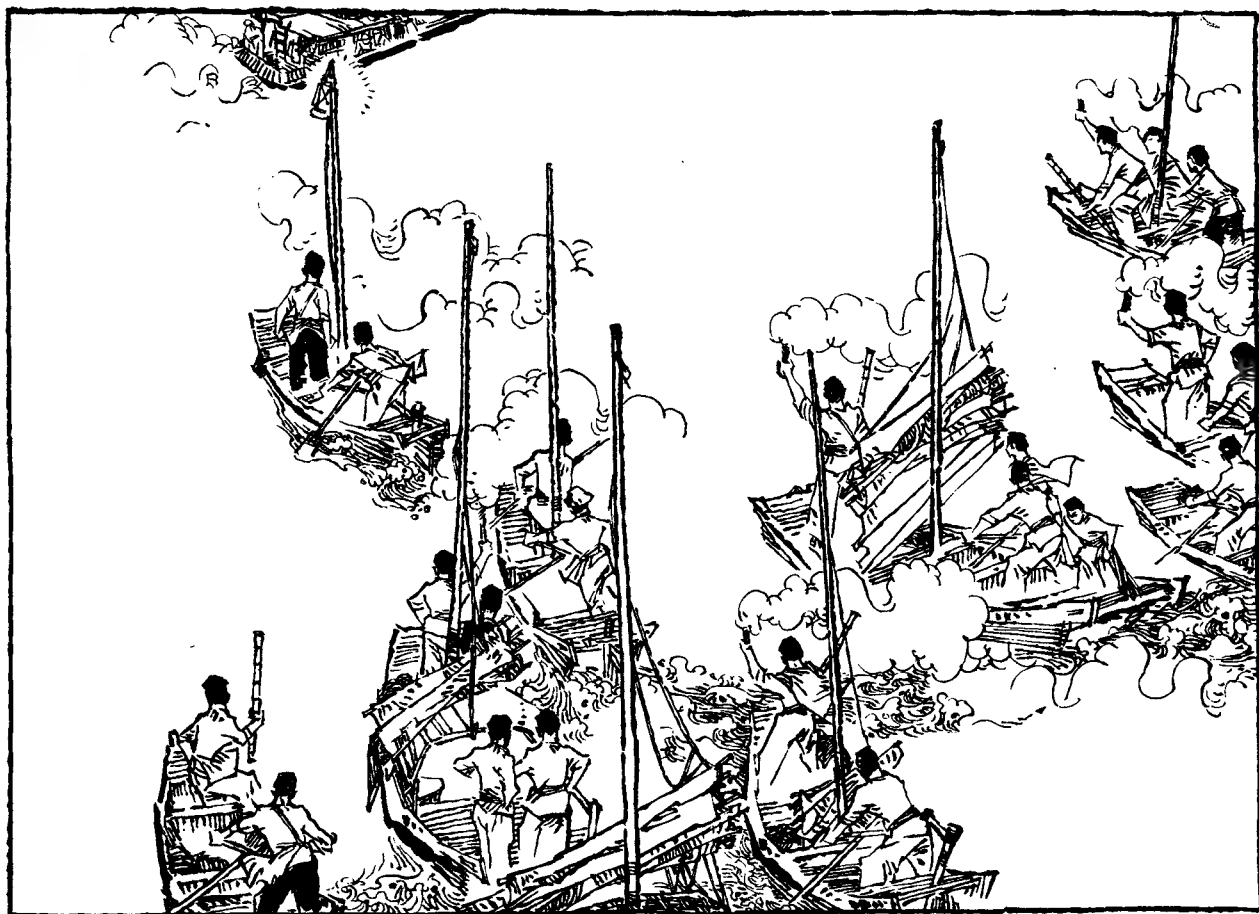
64. Iron Man Cheng and Heitze paddled their boat out from among the reeds. "That was a good trick, Old Cheng!" Heitze congratulated him.



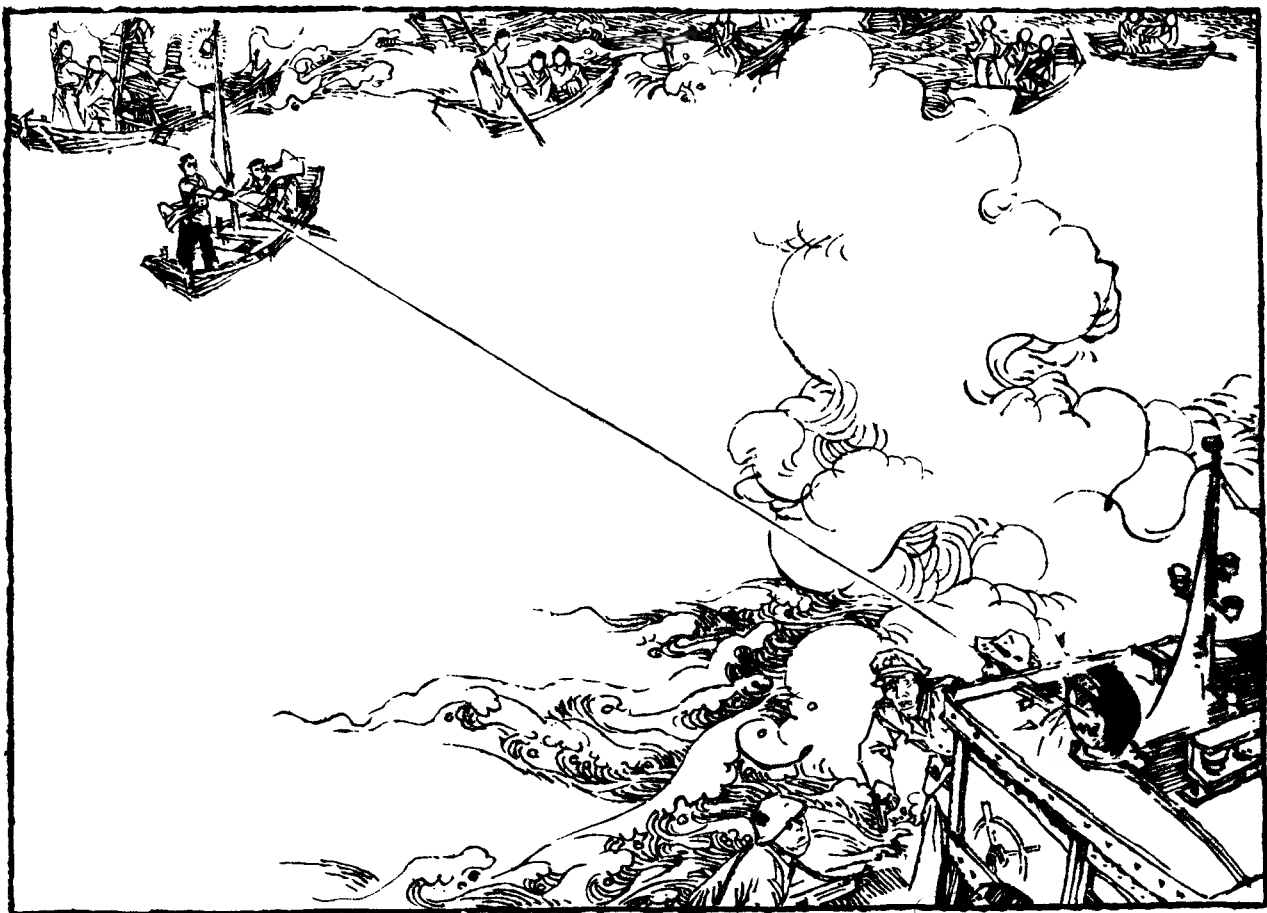
65. "A century ago when the British invaders dispatched their gunboats to Chinkiang harbour, our dockers and fishermen used the same method to trap one of them and captured its arms and ammunition." Cheng explained. Heitze was impressed.



66. Their boat raced towards the steamer. Cheng hoisted a red light on the mast of his boat. At this signal, all the boats hiding in the reeds darted towards their common goal.



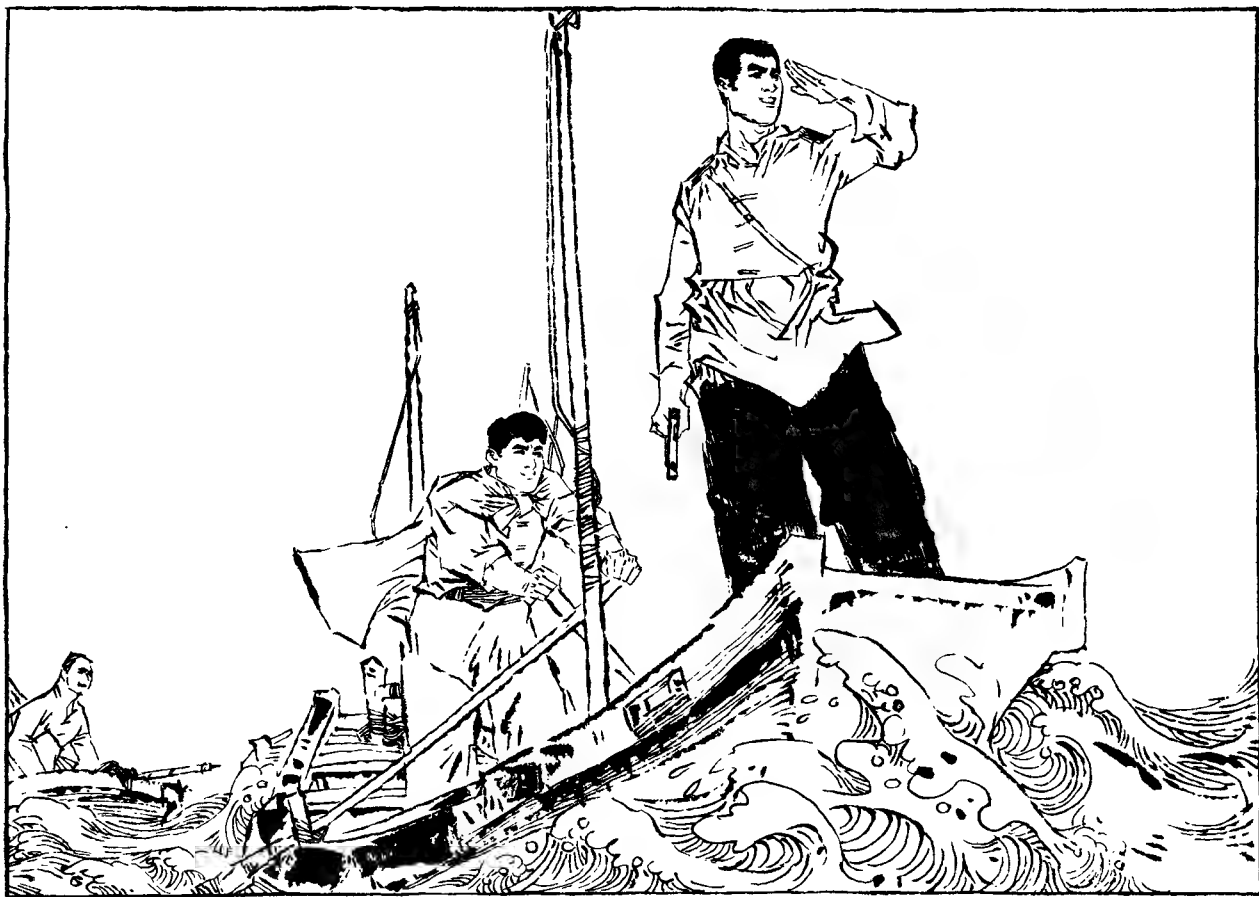
67. They surrounded the enemy boat, the torchlight from the boats lit up the river and the dockers' shouts rang out everywhere.



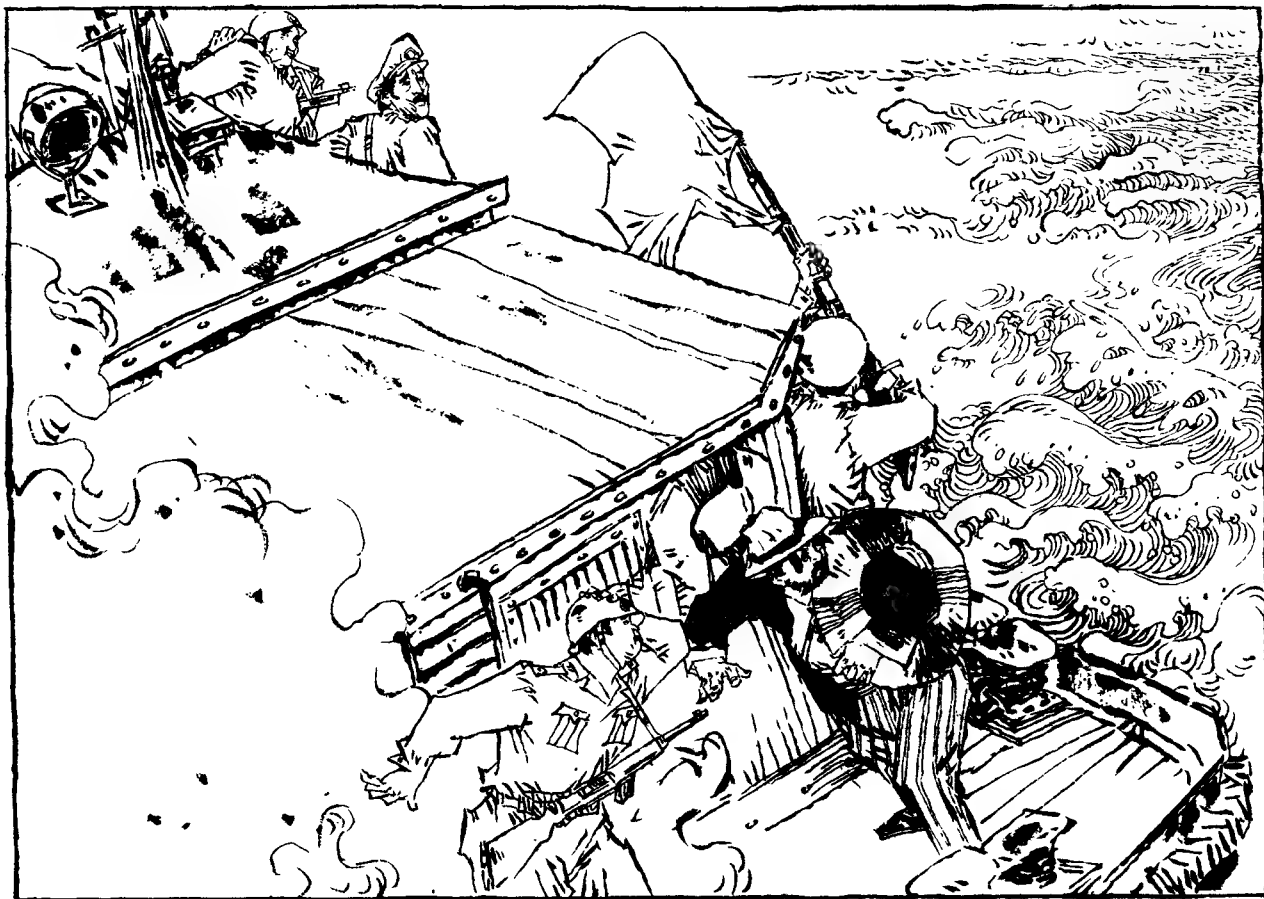
68. "Swish — clink!" Out went the signal light of the enemy boat. Iron Man Cheng had shot it out with his pistol.



69. Desperately the enemy commander stamped his foot and yelled at his men:
"Fire! Why don't you fire!"



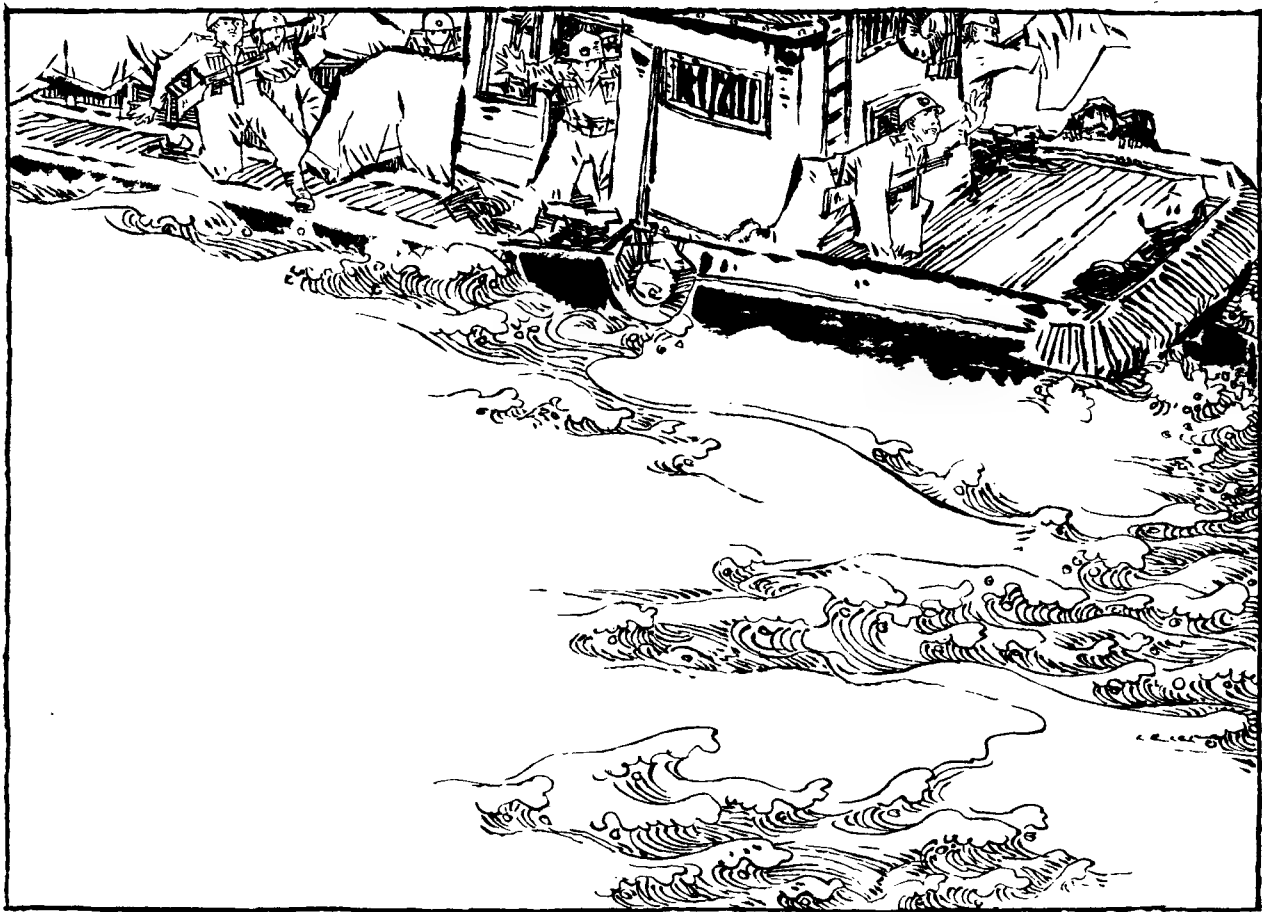
70. At this moment, guns began to boom out from the north side of the river. Cheng shouted to the enemy on the steamer: "Kuomintang officers and soldiers, the Chinese People's Liberation Army is here! You're surrounded! Lay down your arms and you'll be spared!"



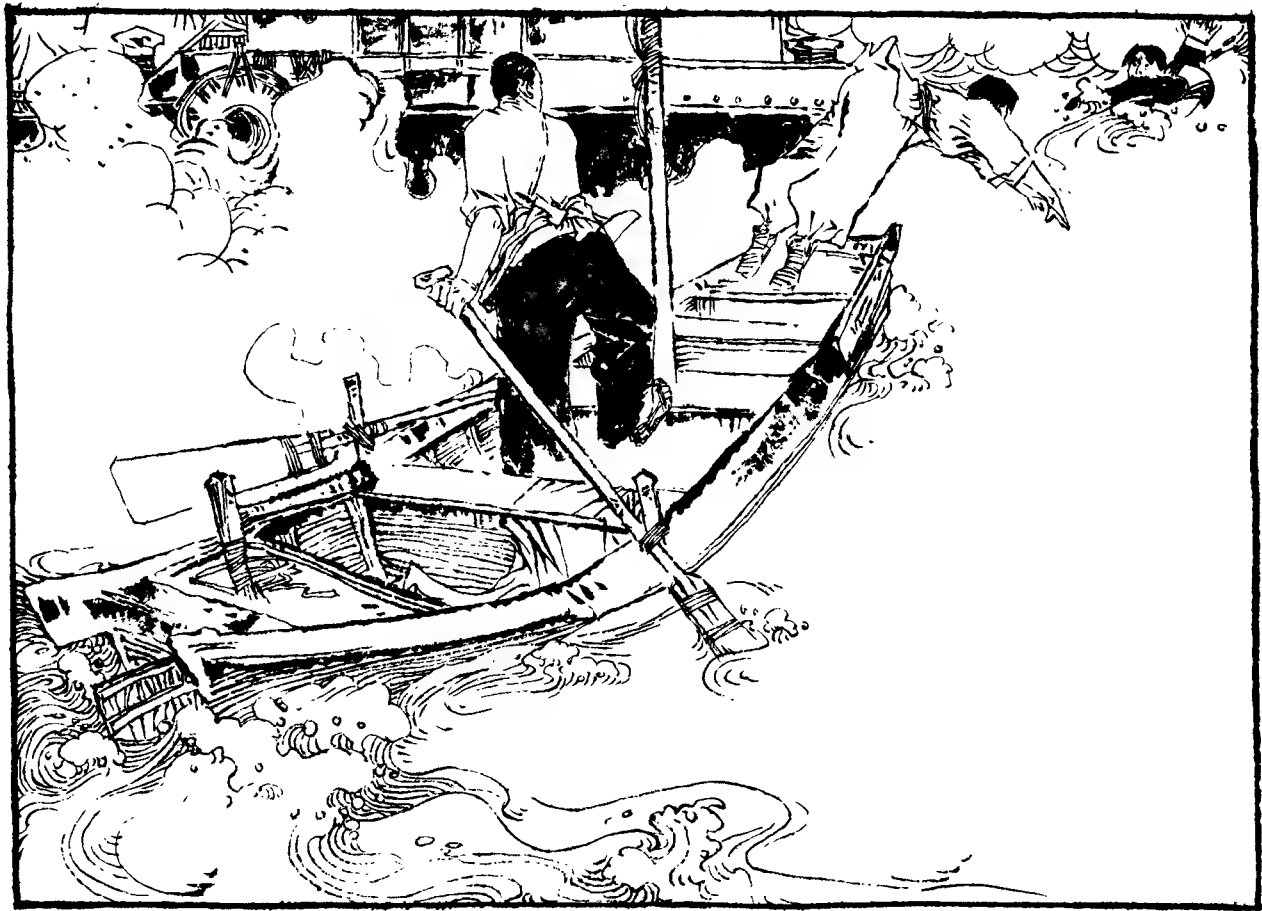
71. The guns and Cheng's shout struck terror into the enemy. A soldier crawled out of the cabin, waving a white shirt at the end of a rifle.



72. The enemy commander trained his pistol on the man. But Cheng was too quick for him and pulled his trigger. The villain fell backwards into the river.



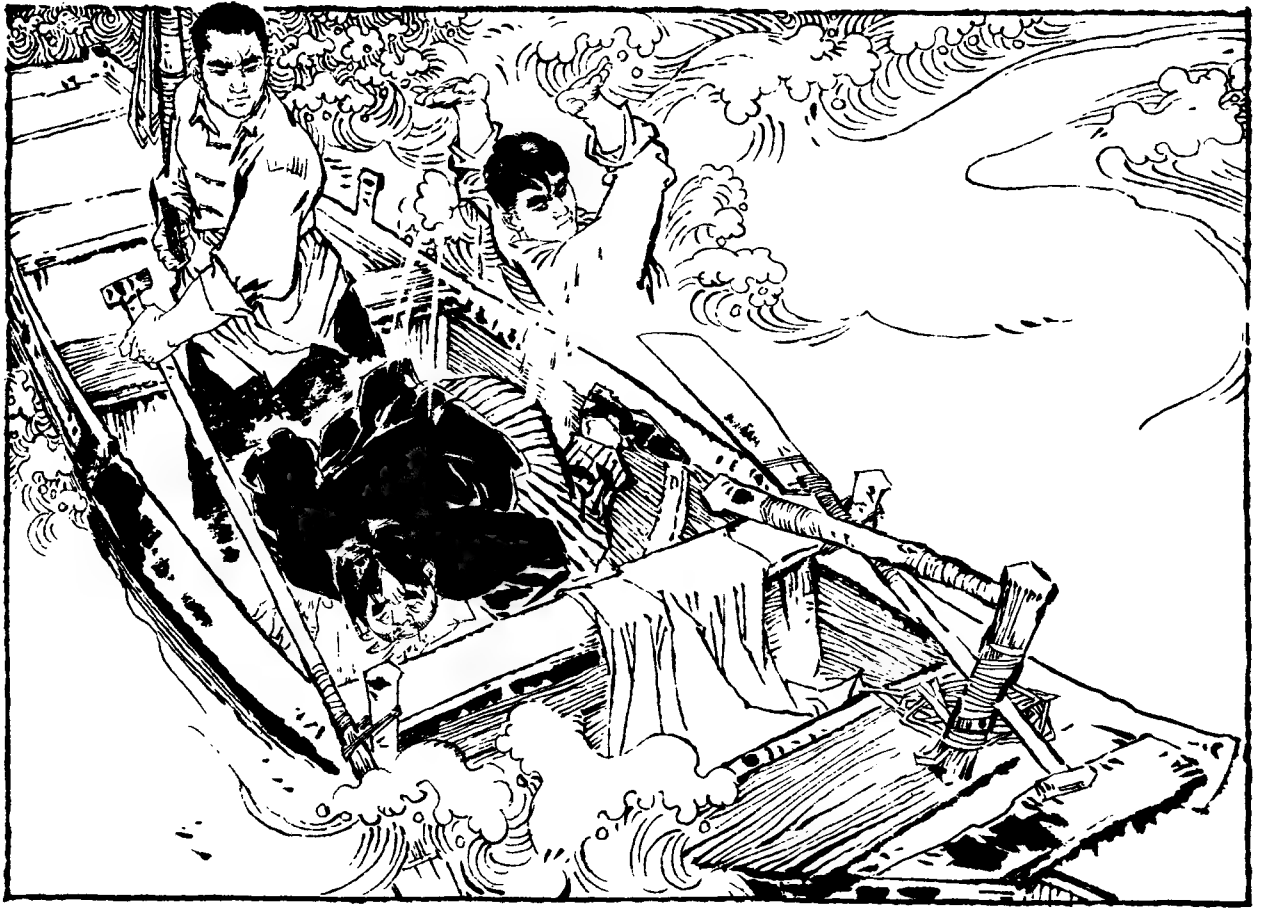
73. Now, the enemy boat was a scene of noisy disorder, with the soldiers crying feverishly: "Don't shoot!" "I surrender!"



74. Whiskers Wang knew he was in trouble and plunged into the water to escape. Heitze dived after him.



75. Heitze was soon at his side. He pushed the corpulent man deep under the water.



76. When Whiskers Wang had his fill of water, Heitze lifted him to surface and hauled him into the boat where he lay throwing up the water he had swallowed.



77. The dockers' patrol and the fishermen's militia boarded the enemy steamer, shouting: "Lay down your arms and you'll be spared." The Kuomintang soldiers held up their hands.



78. Heitze and some other dockers dived into the water and quickly freed the propeller from the fishing nets and stalks which had jammed it.



79. The motor horn gave a cheerful hoot as Iron Man Cheng steered the boat back to the dock.



80. The morning sun rose and the guns on the north side of the river boomed louder. Iron Man Cheng and his mates stood on the deck ready to welcome the Liberation Army men who were crossing the Yangtze.

京 江 怒 涛

胡博综 绘
王孟奇 绘

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